THE RODHAM CLINTON PROBLEM—THE EDITORS

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

HE'S BACK!

Why and Where the Spotted Owl Is Breeding Like Crazy
(AND WHY WE SHOULD SAVE THE FORESTS ANYWAY)

BY GREGG EASTERBROOK

What Whitewater Scandal? ... MICHAEL KINSLEY

Bosnia's Phony Anne Frank ... DAVID RIEFF

Could Ames Have Acted Alone? ... EDWARD JAY EPSTEIN

Gladioli in Turkmenistan ... ANNE MCELVOY

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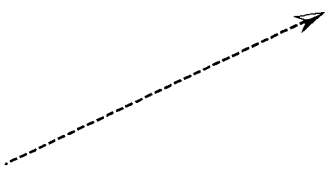

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FROM WASHINGTON

Altman is innocent

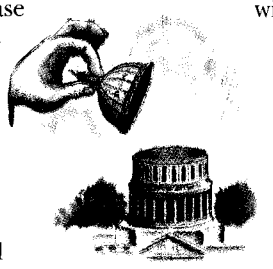
Pardon me for asking, but what exactly was wrong with those three meetings between Treasury and White House officials over Whitewater? President Clinton has conceded that "it would be better if the meetings ... had not occurred," which (God knows) is beyond dispute. The White House also seems to have decided, no doubt wisely, that there is nothing to be gained by even trying to defend the meetings' propriety. But the question remains whether there was anything actually improper about them, and the answer is far from obvious.

To be sure, the Whitewater saga stinks in many ways. The investigation may yet produce evidence of real wrongdoing by the First Lady or even the president himself. It is conceivable that conversations took place in these meetings that were illegal or unethical (Nussbaum to Altman: "Roger, how badly do you want to be treasury secretary...?"), though there is absolutely no evidence that they did. But the mere fact that these meetings occurred is what finally pushed the Whitewater story through some invisible media barrier into Watergate territory. And yet the media have been a bit casual about explaining what, if anything, was illegal or unethical about them.

The Washington Post editorialized that the meetings were "conduct most first-year law students would immediately recognize as improper"—then, a few days later, upped the ante to "improprieties a child of 4 could have figured out." I guess I'm a little slow. I guess I'm also "boneheaded" (*The New York Times*) for failing to see that such a "conclave" is "improper on its face."

It is not good enough to say, as some have, that the meetings were wrong because they created "an appearance of impropriety." That is a familiar cop-out in ethical debates. How such things appear, after all, is largely determined by the press coverage itself. To say that some official action may be portrayed as ethically wrong because it appears to be wrong is circular reasoning. If the only thing wrong with these meetings is how they appeared, that is an ethical failure of the press, not of the Clinton administration. The job of journalists is to bring appearances in line with reality, not to bring reality in line with appearances.

A small box in the March 6 *New York Times*—the only serious effort I've seen to explain what was actually wrong with the meetings—cites two regulations of the Resolution Trust Corporation (the bank regulatory agency of which Deputy Treasury Secretary Roger Altman was acting head). "One requires that federal employees work on matters in which the government has an official interest." As a general principle, that is unobjectionable. But as a case against these meetings, it's a joke. Even if Whitewater was not a "matter of official interest," which is not at all clear, we surely are not having this enormous fuss over the possibility that Treasury officials were distracted from their official duties for an hour or two.



"The second" apposite regulation, according to the *Times*, "requires that officials act with complete impartiality. If, for instance, it is standard practice for regulators not to inform people when cases are referred for criminal inquiry, then it may have been improper for Treasury officials to have briefed officials representing the Clintons." Here we get to the heart of the matter. Did Clinton, as a result of these meetings, get some kind of unfair special treatment?

All these meetings were between government officials. The Clintonites claim—and there is no evidence to contradict them—that the purpose of these meetings was to help in the performance of official functions: dealing with press inquiries and so on. There are all sorts of perfectly legitimate reasons for why the White House might need to be aware of the status of criminal investigations. Did you know, for example—I didn't, until the other day—that the Justice Department routinely reviews the guest lists for presidential social functions and alerts the White House if one of the guests is about to be indicted? Perhaps that is improper, but it is traditional, and no one has ever raised a fuss about it.

The difference about these Whitewater meetings, of course, is that they involved matters in which Bill and Hillary Clinton, as private individuals, are entangled. Was President Clinton, by dint of his official position, gaining access to information about the status of an investigation that Private Citizen Clinton would never have been entitled to? What if Bernard Nussbaum had been the Clintons' private defense lawyer and not White House counsel? Would these meetings then have been verboten? In fact, the notion that officials of federal agencies never meet with lawyers for potential subjects of their investigations, or tell them the status of such investigations, is simply mistaken.

I spoke with several lawyers who have worked on both sides of federal criminal investigations in the financial area. I put to them the circumstances of the most controversial Whitewater meeting: the September 28 briefing of Nussbaum by Treasury general counsel Jean Hanson. Would it be unthinkable for a lawyer for a federal agency to meet with the lawyer for a private individual, and to inform the private lawyer that the matter he was concerned about had been referred to the Justice Department for criminal proceedings and that his client was identified as a "potential beneficiary" but not an investigative target?

They all agreed that, far from unthinkable, such situations arise all the time. The document itself, called a "criminal referral,"—officially transferring the case from the agency to the Justice Department—is confidential. But investigators and prosecutors might have any number of reasons to hold a meeting and report the status of the case. It might be to start the process of settlement, or to hear the other side informally, or just to let someone know he's off the hook. Whatever. But there is certainly no hard-and-fast rule against such meetings. And the implication that these particular meetings were part of some cover-up is unsupported by either facts or logic.

Watergate comparisons are everywhere. *The Wall Street Journal* referred the other day—in the news columns, not on the editorial page!—to "a series of meetings that recall President Nixon's widely condemned meddling into the workings of independent agencies." Oh, please. Just one small corner of Watergate involved a direct effort by the president to punish critics in the media by having the Federal Communications Commission take away their licenses. (Watergate tapes, Nixon to John Dean: "*The [Washington] Post* is going to have damnable, damnable problems out of this one. They have a television station.")

Now that's what I call a cover-up.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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CORRESPONDENCE

Simply put

To the editors:

Your accurate depiction of the genocide now taking place in Bosnia, as well as the strong action advocated, should be commended ("The Abdication," February 28). Yet the editorial placed almost all of the blame for misguided U.S. inaction on the president. Clinton deserves only most of the blame, not all of it. All the leftover blame should go directly to the American people. After all, the American government is a representative democracy, in which the people are the government (and the policymakers). Simply put, if Americans ever genuinely felt a "moral outrage" and truly understood the implications and scope of the horror in Bosnia, they could have pushed their elected representatives in Congress and at the same time sent a strong message or two to the president. This would have ensured necessary action a long time ago, and perhaps saved a generation of Bosnian children. Public support for action throughout the course of this nightmare has been sporadic, with occasional outrage coming only from the sight of an especially horrifying picture amid the countless other horrifying pictures. The editorial indicated that Clinton will go down in history books as the leader of the Western world who stood back and aloofly allowed the madness to progress. In all fairness, there should be room somewhere in those history books for all of our names.

SHADI MOKHTARI
Houston, Texas

To the editors:

The Croat militia in Bosnia has committed atrocities against Muslim civilians, but it is false to claim, as you do, that Croats are "exterminating" them. Croatia was the first to recognize Bosnia and for a long period of time was the country's prime source of arms. Moreover, even with open hostilities between Muslims and Croats, Croatia continues to house, mostly at its own cost, more than 250,000 Bosnian Muslim refugees.

What is upsetting is your failure to explicitly condemn the ethnic cleansing of Croats by Muslim forces in central Bosnia, Croats who, ironically, are most likely to support a unitary Bosnian state. You simply describe their actions as "ugly and foolish," as if you were scolding a school boy. Muslim troops have forced more than 100,000 Croats from their homes. Almost 40 percent of all Croats in Bosnia have been displaced because of the war, a greater percentage than Serbs or Muslims. Muslim forces have massacred civilians in a number of Croat villages, including Doljani and Uzdol, while hampering relief efforts for Croat enclaves, such as Nova Bila. Muslim forces cynically plead for aid to battle the Serbs, yet they have carried out sustained offenses against the Croat militia for almost a year, while failing to take any action to liberate Sarajevo.

JOHN P. KRALJIC
Member, Croatian Anti-Defamation Project
New York, New York

To the editors:

Yes, ideally, the president should have taken a stronger stand on Bosnia, at an earlier period, than he has. But should we expect too much bold statesmanship from any president? When the Europeans wouldn't intervene in their own backyard, when the American people opposed major involvement, when the military resisted an enterprise fraught with so much uncertainty and peril and when the majority of foreign policy professionals urged caution in an ethnic rat's nest like this—should we really have expected Clinton to disregard all this and take the kind of risk that could destroy his presidency?

Clinton has not acted heroically, but presidential statesmanship in the face of factors like these is always a very rare commodity. The president deserves better than verbal damnation.

REO M. CHRISTENSON
Oxford, Ohio

No noticeable effect

To the editors:

The lead editorial in your March 14 issue argued that Representative Jim Cooper's health care reform plan has "other advantages [over the president's plan]. . . . It . . . wouldn't destroy between 300,000 and 1.2 million jobs, as the Congressional Budget Office says the Clinton bill would" (The Editors, "The Universal Fallacy"). This sentence is misleading. Had you looked at the very next clause in that report, you would have seen that the CBO wrote that the plan would have no noticeable effect on the unemployment rate. In the CBO's analysis, employment does not fall because jobs are destroyed, which leaves workers who wish to work without the opportunity to do so and swells the ranks of the unemployed. In the CBO's analysis employment falls because people choose to leave the labor force.

Why? The CBO estimates that there is a substantial number of Americans who work because working is the best, and in many cases the only, way for them to get health insurance. After reform, with guaranteed universal coverage, people will no longer be "job-locked" into working.

In the CBO's analysis the very people whose jobs you say are "destroyed" by the president's plan are among those who benefit most from it: after reform they are no longer forced to work by our broken health insurance system. The rest of the working population gains as well: firms must compete harder for workers and pay higher wages because of the smaller pool of workers.

I ask that you play your proper role in raising, not lowering, the level of the policy debate over health care reform. Please do not continue to present isolated clauses from studies like the CBO report in a way guaranteed to mislead your readers.

ROGER C. ALTMAN
Deputy Secretary of the Treasury
Washington, D.C.

A type of journalism

To the editors:

After reading the charges of sexual harassment leveled against Bill Clinton by Paula Jones and repeated once again by Mickey Kaus ("Old News," *Washington* Diarist, March 7), I am surprised that no one at THE NEW REPUBLIC has bothered to compare her account of this encounter with the one told to David Brock by Arkansas state troopers in the January issue of *The American Spectator*. The two accounts differ so dramatically that the credibility of both is seriously strained.

Jones accuses Bill Clinton of sexually harassing her in a room at the Excelsior Hotel in downtown Little Rock. She claims a state trooper invited her to the governor's room at the hotel. Once there she was propositioned by Clinton for "a type of sex" (whatever that means). She rebuked the overture and left the room within fifteen minutes. Terribly upset by the governor's harassment, Jones left work early that day and recounted the occasion to a number of friends, some of whom have filed corroborating affidavits with Arkansas attorney Cliff Jackson.

Compare this version of the Clinton-Jones encounter with the one alleged by Brock's state troopers. An unnamed Arkansas state trooper told Brock the same story about a woman "remembered only as Paula" that he reputedly told troopers Larry Patterson and Roger Perry—Brock's major sources for "troopergate." According to this unnamed trooper, "after her encounter with Clinton, which lasted no more than an hour,

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as the trooper stood by in the hall, the trooper said Paula told him she was available to be Clinton's regular girlfriend if he so desired."

Jones says it was White House denials that President Clinton even knew the "Paula" mentioned in Brock's story that compelled her to speak out. But how do Jones and Brock explain the sharp disparities in their respective accounts of what transpired at the Excelsior Hotel? Who should the public believe?

MARK P. PETRACCA, PH.D.
Irvine, California

To the editors:

Foolish conservatives think that the lack of coverage received by Paula Jones's charge of sexual harassment against President Clinton is due to a liberal bias among many members of the press. If only they had read Mickey Kaus's Diarist, they'd know reporters' "dirty little secret": they aren't biased, they're "patriotic." After all, Clinton is "the best president we've had in a long time." "Few journalists want to see the president crippled now that he is making some progress cracking large, intractable domestic problems." If only Rush Limbaugh, et al., would read Kaus's column! Surely they would retract their petty criticisms and admire the patriotism of our nation's fourth estate.

JONATHAN D. MUEHL
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

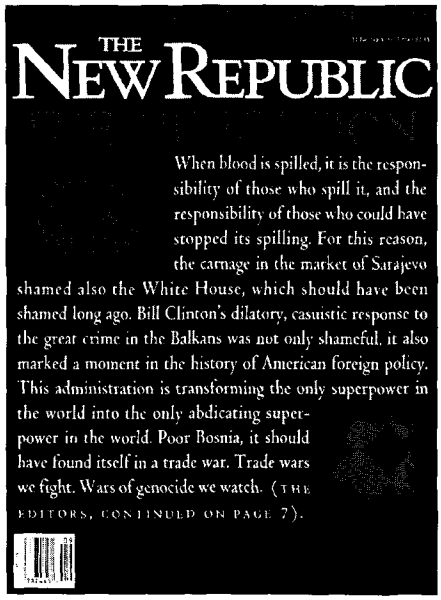
United Kingdom

To the editors:

In criticizing President Clinton's authorization for the visit of Gerry Adams to the United States (Notebook, February 21) you state, "Both Dublin and London are prepared to talk to Adams formally if he will renounce violence (à la Arafat) and accept, as both Dublin and London do, the right of the unionist majority to determine its own future." The latter requirement deflects or defers the other half of the equation. What about the right of the 40 percent nationalist minority to determine its own future? The Dublin government does not represent the nationalist minority of Northern Ireland in the eyes of the British or of the unionists. If the nationalist minority has been left out in the cold for the past seventy years, who will make sure that they do not continue to be left out in the cold? There is little reason yet to hope that the Dublin government will be able to do so. That is the dilemma that faces not only Gerry Adams, but all who are sincerely seeking a workable solution to the civil strife.

The British rule of law in Northern Ireland is explicitly backed by the power of the United Kingdom, and that power has been used in Northern Ireland, on occasion, in violation of the rule of law. The exercise of force always remains at London's disposal, and both unionists and nationalists are quite aware of that fact. Moreover, the unionists partially depend on that fact for their apparent intransigence. Since Northern Ireland is a part of the United Kingdom, both the nationalist minority and the unionist majority in Northern Ireland are tiny minorities of the larger population of the United Kingdom. So it is less than evenhanded, and obscure in context, to speak of the rights of one to determine its own future without reference to the rights of the other to do likewise.

ANTHONY C. MCGETTRICK
Laredo, Texas


THE
NEW REPUBLIC
When blood is spilled, it is the responsibility of those who spill it, and the responsibility of those who could have stopped its spilling. For this reason, the carnage in the market of Sarajevo shamed also the White House, which should have been shamed long ago. Bill Clinton's dilatory, casuistic response to the great crime in the Balkans was not only shameful, it also marked a moment in the history of American foreign policy. This administration is transforming the only superpower in the world into the only abdicating superpower in the world. Poor Bosnia, it should have found itself in a trade war. Trade wars we fight. Wars of genocide we watch. (THE EDITORS, CONTINUED ON PAGE 7).

Still running

To the editors:

Michael Kinsley's February 21 TRB column mistakenly asserts that David Duke "won the [Republican] Party's nomination for governor of Louisiana in 1991" ("A Rat's Patootie") In fact, the former nominee, chosen in a caucus-convention system open to all registered Republicans, was then Congressman Clyde Holloway in a landslide victory over the combined forces of Duke and then Governor Roemer, working independently of each other for a "no endorsement" stance by the convention. Duke's name was not even officially placed in nomination.

Duke continued running in Louisiana's unique "open, nonpartisan primary" system without the Republican nomination (as did Roemer, who received the bulk of Republican votes in the primary), and made it into the general election runoff against Edwin Edwards largely on the strength of support from white Democrats. Meanwhile, members of the state Republican executive committee denounced Duke repeatedly.

They did so knowing that when Duke's name *was* placed in nomination for a U.S. Senate race the previous year, he received less than 4 percent of the delegate votes.

QUINN HILLYER
Washington, D.C.

Unhealthy

To the editors:

Senator Harris Wofford reveals something scary about the shape of things to come when he writes, "Doing the right thing in health care means achieving two basic goals: guaranteeing coverage for every American and checking the escalation of costs." The first could be the motto of an insurance agent, the second of an adjuster, and neither has any direct bearing on the quality of care provided, or the health of patients. In short, the senator proposes health care reform without regard to health care itself.

JOEL JACOBSEN
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Come to Papa

To the editors:

I am puzzled by Stanley Kauffmann's denigration of *Wrestling Ernest Hemingway* as a film that does not belong to any category of "recognizable forms of success" ("Midwinter Roundup," February 14). At a time when Hollywood films are increasingly homogenized and conformist, shouldn't a critic welcome a picture that does not fit into the same old formulas of farce, melodrama and romance? Also, isn't it refreshing that a major Hollywood studio should finance a film whose title features the name of one of the century's greatest writers? Warner Brothers has displayed courage at a time when most movies are aimed at people who have probably never heard of, let alone read, Ernest Hemingway.

CHRISTOPHER HAWTHORNE
Phoenix, Arizona

Short-sighted

To the editors:

Myopia! That explains why, during his recent trip through Eastern Europe, all Michael Lewis could see to write about were the shabby hotels and bad food ("The Vision Thing," Washington Diarist, February 7). I thought he was merely a whining, spoiled yuppie.

LOUIS H. BENJAMIN
New York, New York

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

A History Lesson

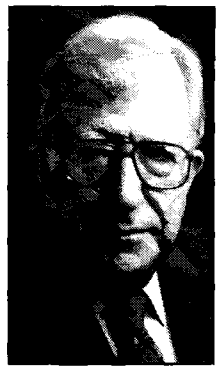
The latest hot idea in school reform is management by private, for-profit companies, and the leader in the field is Education Alternatives, Inc. (EAI). EAI, which has been managing nine schools in Baltimore, is apparently the top contender for a contract in Michigan. The company has an attractive come-on. It claims that, by combining business know-how and educational expertise, it can save failing schools *and* make money. And it will achieve these results using the per-pupil allowance the district already spends. This sounds like a terrific deal, but if the superintendents in Baltimore and Michigan—and the other people who are currently talking up EAI—knew their history a little better, they might hesitate.

Twenty years ago, during the Nixon administration, there was another public-private venture called "performance contracting" that was supposed to save public education. Performance contracting companies also offered what looked like a no-lose proposition. They would undertake to improve student performance in a given subject or subjects, and they would be paid only if students met certain standards.

The idea got enormous attention and praise from the press. Indeed, it sounded so impressive that the federal government funded demonstration projects all the country. But we soon began hearing horror stories. Classes were in chaos. On average, student scores in performance contracting schools were no better than scores in ordinary schools. And in some schools, the companies improved the kids' performance by giving them the same test over and over or—more simply and directly—by teaching them the answers to the tests.

Performance contracting ended in scandal because it turned out that, while these companies had a brilliant marketing idea, they had no educational expertise and no curriculum. They were, basically, one day ahead of the kids. And since there was a lot of money at stake, they were also willing to cheat. The performance contracting bubble lasted a couple of years before it burst, and nothing has been heard of the companies since. But now we have EAI. The same sort of praise is being heaped on this company and there are the same kinds of expectations. Have we reason to think it will do any better than the performance contractors? I don't think so.

Some readers will probably discount my skepticism because they assume that a teachers' union would be automatically opposed to letting a private, for-profit outfit manage schools. In fact, the union welcomed EAI when the company came to Baltimore. However, the relationship soured when the company quickly—and without warning or explanation—made a number of changes in what had been agreed on.



Twenty years ago, there was another public-private venture called "performance contracting" that was supposed to save public education.

For example, EAI announced that it would put all special education students in EAI schools into regular classrooms and replace special ed teachers with "interns"—recent college grads willing to work for $7 per hour and no benefits. This meant that youngsters with special needs were suddenly thrust into regular classrooms and that teachers who had no experience or preparation in working with kids like these had to take them on. And the fact that the interns were so poorly compensated virtually guaranteed a constant turnover—the last thing in the world these youngsters need, given the instability of their lives. Was the company devious? Incompetent? Inexperienced? We didn't know.

When I asked for a meeting with EAI, I found out. The company heads told me that, after they had agreed to manage the schools in Baltimore, they realized the company didn't have the expertise to take on a project of this size and scope. So they told the mayor and the superintendent of schools the company would need another year to prepare. But the mayor and superintendent said "nothing doing." They had to show they were doing something about the schools right away, and unless the company was willing to start immediately, the deal was off. EAI got the same answer when it said that the most it could handle was three, not nine, schools. We know the rest of the story. Like the performance contracting companies, EAI lacked the expertise and really had nothing to sell. And like the performance contracting companies, EAI decided to go for it.

What's the harm? People tend to think that the situation is self-correcting: If the company does a poor job it will lose money and go out of business, and if it does a good job it will make money. But the people who run the company own a large number of shares, and these shares appreciate whenever a school district gives them a contract. Indeed, they have already sold lots of shares and made a lot of money. It's perfectly possible for them to become multimillionaires even if EAI turns out to be an educational disaster—the way performance contracting did. Such is the nature of the marketplace.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1994 by Albert Shanker.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

MARCH 28, 1994

SPEAK, HILLARY

Among the president's high command, the realization has slowly set in: they have taken what was a minor irritant and turned it into their own national nightmare.
—*The Washington Post*

Just when a Democrat seems on the verge of a successful, productive presidency, the Whitewater affair blossoms. Can this really be a coincidence? The answer is yes, it can. Whitewater is not simply what Hillary Rodham Clinton recently told *Elle* magazine she thinks it is, namely, a "well-financed attempt to undermine my husband ... by people who have a different political agenda." Republicans didn't make the Clintons involve themselves with a sleazy S&L operator. They didn't force Rodham Clinton to make money by representing clients before Arkansas state officials who owed their appointments to her husband. (Or was it to Rodham Clinton herself? Who knows?) The idea that this whole business is just partisan politics is one of the comforting defenses Clinton's supporters will have to abandon if they want to cool the capital's feverish anticipation of scandal.

There are other false comforts. The most popular is the notion that "the cover-up is worse than the crime." True, press coverage of Whitewater has been driven by a sort of Tenth Planet theory of investigative journalism. Just as astronomers detect the presence of unknown planets by observing their gravitational effect on surrounding orbs, so reporters have divined a major scandal by observing the surprisingly fierce protective reaction of the Clintons. But this astronomical method has its virtues. The Clintons' behavior *may* simply be the result of an irrational inclination to secrecy, or foolishly zealous lawyering, or staff incompetence. But maybe not. Sometimes guilty behavior is the product of guilt. We won't know until the facts come out.

It's also true, as the Clintons' defenders note, that even at their worst, the Whitewater facts won't amount to anything impeachable, because (unlike Watergate) they mainly concern actions the president took before he became president. But, at their worst, those actions might be pretty sleazy—in effect, the sale of a governor's power and influence for personal and political profit. Sleazy enough to cripple Clinton's presidency? We doubt it. But, again, nobody can know until the facts come out.

So the facts must come out. But the current strategy of slow-motion revelation—"let the special counsel do its job"—hardly serves the interests of the administration. It is not a formula for "putting Whitewater behind us." It is a formula for years of distraction, with periodic orgies of subpeona-compliance as the press waits eagerly for the results of the investigation by Robert Fiske.

There is a simpler and swifter way to get the facts out. There is no need to wait for Fiske. There is no need for congressional hearings. The Clintons can take a few days to meet with their lawyers and gather what evidence they can. Then they can hold a press conference. Let reporters ask all the questions they want. Answer them. And then move on. Indeed, the press conference solution is so obvious that the Clintons' failure to hold one should itself be factored into the Tenth Planet theory.

A press conference featuring *both* Clintons would also help resolve the troubling ambiguity in the status of the First Lady. Until now she has tried to have it both ways, playing a powerful, official public role but retreating behind a traditional familial veil of privacy whenever the propriety of her actions is challenged. It is not anti-feminist to suggest that if Rodham Clinton wants the power of a full-fledged politician she should behave like a normal politician, which means being accountable in public (not in *Elle*) if your integrity is put in doubt. When vice presidential candidate Geraldine Ferraro's integrity was challenged during the 1984 campaign, she faced the charges in a marathon press conference. Is Rodham Clinton less capable than Ferraro?

Actually, there is a better precedent than the Ferraro press conference. It is the press conference with which President Jimmy Carter dispatched the "Billygate" scandal in 1980. The breathless *Washington Post* quote at the beginning of this editorial was not written about Whitewater. It was written fourteen years ago, about Carter's troubles with his brother. Billygate, too, featured a febrile journalistic atmosphere with a lot of smoke, but not much fire. After a month of piecemeal revelations, Carter finally published a 13,000-word report (carefully labeled as "not definitive"). He answered press questions for almost an hour. And the scandal, as a *Post* editor put it at the time, went "poof."

By laying out the facts themselves, the Clintons may not be able to make Whitewater go "poof." But any embarrassments they would reveal can't be large enough to justify prolonging the administration's agony. Can they? •

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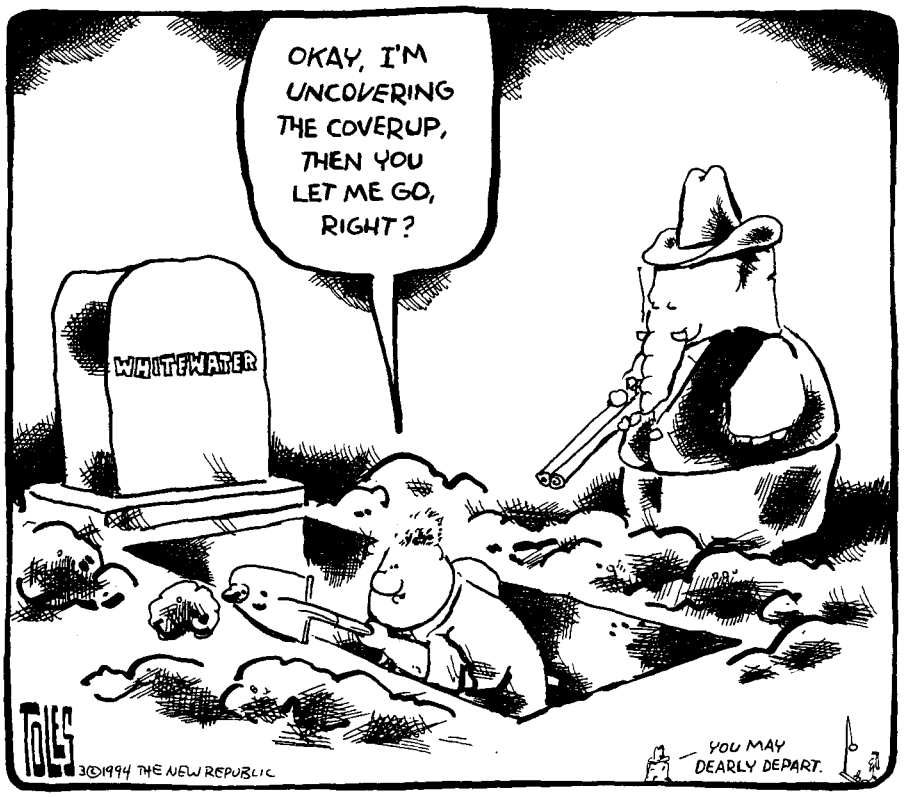
NOTEBOOK

WISE MEN CAN JUMP: "If only Lloyd Cutler were alive. Wait a minute, he *is* alive. Get him on the phone." It's easy to fantasize about the internal White House discussions that led to the hiring of Cutler to replace White House counsel Bernard Nussbaum. But one also wonders about the historical memory of the aides who recommended him. As Washington's premier "liberal" lawyer, Cutler's specialty has been to get large corporations out from under the burden of regulations proposed by other liberal lawyers. (For starters, he helped American car manufacturers dilute auto safety rules.) Cutler is not a crude influence-peddler along the lines of, say, Tommy Boggs; he prefers to snow opponents with fancy legal arguments. But as a hired gun who has made a fortune off the liberal administrative state, he is hardly a moral beacon in the Whitewater fog. Perhaps more important, from Clinton's point of view, Cutler (like Nussbaum) is a man with a political tin ear. In 1980, during his last stint as White House counselor, he urged Jimmy Carter (then facing Edward Kennedy's primary challenge) to use the dedication of the JFK presidential library as the occasion for a lawyerly, point-by-point critique of Kennedy's arms control record. (Carter ignored him and delivered an encomium to JFK, which was a huge success.) In 1987 Cutler advised Robert Bork to abandon his long-held conservative convictions in order to save his Supreme Court nomination, an implausible move that backfired. Cutler also plotted and defended the wildly unpopular congressional pay raise of 1989 (insisting that members of Congress would still be underpaid compared with major league baseball players—an argument only a $500,000-per-year lawyer could love). We could go on and on. Cutler is a very smart man, and a very good lawyer. But if Clinton thinks he has acquired a political miracle-worker, he should think again.



MR. STAPLES'S PLANET: "I don't think Bellow's work is sufficiently tainted with anti-black attitudes that it poisons his whole work." Tainted, we are to infer, but not sufficiently tainted. This, according to *The Boston Globe* a few weeks ago, was how Cambridge novelist Paul Buttenweiser explained his decision not to withdraw an invitation to Saul Bellow to appear as a guest at a Boston Library dinner. In his own eyes, no doubt, Buttenweiser is a hero of political incorrectness; but with friends like this, a writer needs no enemies. The political corrector, in this case, was Brent Staples, whose recent memoir, *Parallel Time*, recounts his years as a graduate student at the University of Chicago, where, among other distinctions, he stalked Saul Bellow. This from a writer who resents the suspicion of other people on the street that *he* is stalking *them*. "What would I do when I caught him?" writes Staples, with not quite enough irony. "Perhaps I'd lift him bodily and pin him against a wall. Perhaps I'd corner him on the stairs and take up questions about 'pork chops' and 'crazy buffaloes' and barbarous black pickpockets. I wanted to trophy his fear. I stalked Dorchester Avenue for months before I caught him out...." Those "pork chops" and "crazy buffaloes" come from *Humboldt's Gift*, where they are the awful appellations for black people uttered by a tawdry little hood named Rinaldo. Not Bellow; Rinaldo. No, Staples doesn't come right out and call Bellow a racist, but when *The New York Times Magazine* excerpted his book the damage was done. Staples objects that Bellow's novels include depictions of black male sexuality and violence; and he expresses this objection in a chapter that is itself riddled with black pimps and black prostitutes, compared to whom Bellow's little menaces are quaint. "You had to protect yourself in Bellow's presence," writes Staples. In a city like Chicago it is grotesque to put a member of the Committee on Social Thought high on the list of local dangers. Knowledge is supposed to be pursued. It is not supposed to be stalked. •

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On the phone in Nairobi.

KENYA HEAR ME?

By Joshua Hammer

Kenya has long enjoyed a reputation as the one country in sub-Saharan Africa that works, relatively speaking. It has decent highways, well-managed game parks, local governments that provide a modicum of social services. Still, there are constant reminders that you're living in the developing world: heavy rains usually mean blackouts lasting as long as thirty-six hours (unless you have a government minister living in your neighborhood), and the Nairobi City Council, which recently announced it was bankrupt, can take weeks to pump out an overflowing septic tank or repair a broken water line. Perhaps the most maddening aspect of quotidian life in Kenya—and one that continues to deteriorate, to the annoyance of the Western press corps and United Nations bureaucrats who have made Nairobi their African headquarters—is the telephone service, provided, erratically, by the state-owned Kenya Post and Telecommunications Corporation (KPTC).

Consider the local phone call. On any weekday morning simply communicating with my office—or any other downtown Nairobi number—from my home on Nairobi's outskirts takes a minimum of thirty-five or forty tries. I used to curse and slam down the phone in frustration, but now I've come to savor the weird variety of technical failures that greet my attempts to get through. These include (*a*) a busy signal, (*b*) dead silence, (*c*) dead silence followed by an inability to disconnect the call, (*d*) an out-of-order tone, (*e*) a taped message in Swahili announcing that the number has been changed, (*f*) a low, guttural ring that sounds vaguely like a human belch, (*g*) a message in English and Swahili advising me to try the call again later and (*h*) my favorite, crossed wires. (For some reason, this screwup almost always interjects me into a conversation at an auto insurance company or an Indian-run jewelry store.)

The main reason for the growing phone mess is a standard African syndrome: crumbling infrastructure and lack of money. According to officials I talked with at the KPTC, Nairobi's telephone exchanges are overloaded; most have twice as many phone lines coming in as they do going out. (For instance: 600 subscriber lines flow into my neighborhood exchange, while barely 300 emerge.) The pressure to expand telephone capacity is growing more intense as the city's population explodes (it's up to 3 million), but cash is unavailable, especially since Western nations and the World Bank suspended most development aid in 1992 to protest the Kenyan government's corruption and resistance to democratic reforms. Even maintenance has ground to a halt. Exchange equipment and overhead and underground lines have disintegrated; when it rains heavily, much of Nairobi's phone system is knocked out for hours or even days.

The red tape-laden and underpaid bureaucracy hasn't helped matters. My phone service has been shut off three times without notice for various technicalities. Each interruption requires a trip fifteen miles out of Nairobi to a ramshackle office in a cornfield, where I plead with KPTC functionaries and dangle the promise of Johnny Walker Red Label. Then there's the friend in the press corps whose international phone service was cut without warning one morning because, she was told by the KPTC clerk, "Your bills are too high." The friend pointed out that her news agency had paid every phone bill on time for the past twenty years. The man was unmoved. She got it restored twelve days later after pleas, threats and, finally, a call to the minister of communications.

In Nairobi merely getting a telephone installed can be a lengthy ordeal. Typical is the resident, recently described in *The Nation* newspaper, who applied for a phone in 1987. Last month he received a letter from the phone company informing him that they had processed his request but that the engineer who was to install his phone had gotten lost looking for the applicant's house. Unless the company was provided with a detailed map by March 1, the letter went on, the entire procedure would have to begin again. Beyond mismanagement, there's also blatant theft. Last fall one American correspondent I know received a call from a phone company clerk notifying her that her predecessor still owed $500 in unpaid phone charges. She went to headquarters and paid the man in cash, then later learned he was running a free-lance scam within the phone company office.

Even Nairobi's telephone directory bears the stamp of incompetence. Prepared in collaboration with a Portuguese publisher, the 1993 phone book quickly became the city's biggest joke, thanks to a bizarre alphabetizing system that rendered it virtually useless. Some Nairobi residents were listed under their first names, some unmarried women were found under "M" for Miss and the Aga Khan was listed under "H" for—what else?—His Excellency. The 1994 directory hit the streets last month, with typically chaotic results. Although the book is supposed to be distributed free by the government, most copies were stolen by KPTC workers and are now being hawked at Nairobi traffic circles for $8 apiece.

Of course, it could be worse. In the region around Lake Naivasha, fifty miles west of here, gangs stripped valuable copper telephone wires from poles strung along seventy miles of highway. The phone company lacks the cash to replace the stolen cables—and the entire population has been without service for nearly two years.

JOSHUA HAMMER is *Newsweek*'s Nairobi bureau chief.

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DRIPS

By Fred Barnes

For once Mack McLarty, the courtly White House chief of staff, was more impatient than President Clinton. He and Clinton discussed a replacement for Bernie Nussbaum on March 5, the day after Nussbaum was canned as White House counsel. The next morning, a Sunday, they talked again. McLarty wanted action. He called the president that afternoon and urged a decision—now. Twenty minutes later Clinton called back. He'd decided on Lloyd Cutler, the old Washington hand who had become close to White House officials, first as mentor to Zoe Baird, Clinton's failed nominee for attorney general, then as defender of the president on Whitewater. McLarty rousted Cutler out of the Kennedy Center matinee of Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera*, an opera of political intrigue set in Boston, and arranged to drop by the lawyer's Georgetown home. Cutler was favorably inclined, so they drove to the White House at 7:30 p.m. to meet with Clinton. McLarty couldn't stay. He rushed off to dinner with Larry King of CNN. Cutler stayed behind, agreed to become special counsel and two days later began work.

This is known as the insider ploy. The idea is to quell a crisis by bringing on board a Washington veteran who knows the media and hobnobs with leaders of the opposition. The press will be reassured, the opposition quieted. If the insider brings along some clever plans, all the better. This is Cutler's second stint as White House savior. Jimmy Carter, in political trouble, summoned him in 1979. Ronald Reagan used the insider ploy as Iran-contra raged in 1987, replacing chief of staff Donald Regan with former Senate Majority Leader Howard Baker. Clinton used it last May, hiring David Gergen as counselor. The joke then was that the youthful White House staff needed someone old enough to buy beer.

The ploy usually works for a spell. But it's a bandage, not a cure. Cutler might attract the spotlight for a few days, taking it off Whitewater. He's more politically adroit than his predecessor, Nussbaum. And his presence in the Oval Office will make the president feel better. At the announcement of Cutler's hiring on March 8 (at age 76, he agreed to stay only 130 days), Clinton called him "a firm, uncompromising and steady hand." He made it sound like Cutler was his father, not his lawyer. Clinton already knew Cutler was supportive on Whitewater. After Cutler had minimized the scandal in a January *Washington Post* op-ed piece, White House aides urged T.V. bookers to pit him against the president's Whitewater critics. Cutler told me at the time he hadn't authorized this.

Clinton's two Whitewater problems remain: the scandal itself and Hillary Rodham Clinton. The president is desperate to show that Whitewater isn't Watergate. "There is a huge difference here," he said on March 7. "No. 1: we're not covering up or anything.... No. 2: no one has accused me of any abuse of authority in office.... No. 3: there is no credible evidence and no credible charge that I violated any criminal or civil federal law eight or nine years ago when most of these facts that are being bandied around are discussed." Maybe not, but Whitewater has the trappings of Watergate: special prosecutor, shredding of documents, senior aides thrown overboard, appearance of a cover-up.

To refute the Watergate analogy, the White House mobilized the senior staff. With a negative press and hostile Republicans, a senior official says, "It would have been an enormous mistake for the administration to be left without a spokesman." No chance of that. Clinton aides dominated Sunday talk shows, the Monday morning news programs, even "Nightline" and "Larry King Live." Vice President Al Gore, on "Meet the Press," suggested Clinton is delighted with special prosecutor Robert Fiske, who bombed the White House with subpoenas. "There's a great deal of respect for Mr. Fiske and a willingness—indeed, an eagerness—on the part of everyone in the White House to comply fully ... and completely."

What Gore implied—Clinton is the opposite of President Nixon, who fought Watergate prosecutors—was made explicit by Gergen, who worked in the Nixon White House. Then, "we also made the terrible, terrible mistake of refusing to comply with various requests from legal authorities," he said. "In this case President Clinton has now launched what I think is a very effective and aggressive effort to comply with the special counsel." Gergen deftly disassociated himself from the true believers. "We had a Whitewater team to deal with this. I was not part of that team." Gore did some distancing, too, saying he hasn't grilled the Clintons on Whitewater. "I will readily acknowledge to you that I have not made it a practice to try to gather all the details about this matter."

Stephanopoulos reduced the scandal from Watergate proportions to a cheap partisan spat. On "Today," he declared Republicans "can't run on the economy. They can't run on health care.... They can't run on crime. So they're trying to exploit this issue." Political adviser Paul Begala's assignment wasn't clear. "The Clintons didn't have anything to do with the savings and loan that went under," he told Larry King. (In truth, Hillary Rodham Clinton was the lawyer for the failed S&L, Madison Guaranty.) "They were just passive investors." (Rodham Clinton built and sold a Whitewater model home.) On the suicide of deputy White House counsel Vince Foster, Begala noted: "To the extent you can ever know the

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heart and soul and mind of a troubled person, you can know that Whitewater was not on his mind at the time." (Foster was working on Whitewater the day of his death.)

The Hillary problem is greater than the White House lets on. Clinton responded with a non-denial denial when asked on March 7 about a *Washington Times* report that Rodham Clinton had ordered the shredding of documents in the Arkansas governor's mansion in 1992. The shredding came after *The New York Times* published the first Whitewater exposé. "Law firms dispose of their documents all the time," the president explained on March 7. That's true, but these weren't documents at the Rose Law Firm. They were documents kept privately at home by Rodham Clinton. The newspaper said its three sources couldn't say if the documents were Whitewater-related. If they were and the shredding tale is true, she's in trouble.

The president gave his wife a stirring defense, but it wasn't enough. She is embattled. The focus on Whitewater, she told *Elle* magazine, "is a well-organized and well-financed attempt to undermine my husband, and by extension, myself." That's paranoid. Reagan once argued his enemies zinged his wife, Nancy, when he was their real target. But Rodham Clinton asserted the opposite: enemies were trying to get at her through him. That's a new one.

It's also poor damage control. The Clintons' own master of damage control, Gergen, plugged Rodham Clinton ("an honest woman") on "Nightline." But he and the president's wife have rocky relations, having disagreed on health care, naming a special prosecutor, etc. "She and I can sometimes go at it," Gergen said. Her allies hint Gergen is reluctant to defend her and the president aggressively on Whitewater. They're right about that. But who can blame him? •

Rick Ames's connections.

ON THE TEAM

By Edward Jay Epstein

In considering Aldrich Ames's arrest as an alleged Soviet mole—and the serious questions it raises about the CIA's past and future as an intelligence service—I thought back to what James Jesus Angleton, the agency's former chief of counterintelligence, once told me: "Think of espionage service as a highly specialized employment service." Recruiters, he said, aim to find foreign government officials with legitimate access to secret documents. Up to a point, like conventional corporate headhunters, they consult biographical files to find a candidate to fill an opening; they then observe his work (or even interview him) and make him an offer to change his loyalties that he will have difficulty refusing. But unlike their counterparts in the private sector, these recruiters do not ask a candidate to give up his old job. Instead, they insist that he maintain two positions simultaneously: one for his own government, and one for his new, secret employer. If the recruit does not have access to the needed material, his secret employer takes on the task of managing his career, providing him with "successes" in the form of cases and information so that he can rise to a level where he can be useful. As the CIA's Soviet bloc division noted in 1973 about its capabilities at career-managing a potential mole recruited at a foreign embassy: "We are prepared to guide and assist him in his career, running him in place until he develops the access we need."

Yet while CIA officials have the utmost confidence in their ability to successfully mount such grand plots against Russia, many of these same officials have been unable to accept that the KGB has a similar capacity for conspiracy. These officials placed great faith in the CIA's lie-detector tests and other routine security procedures and derided those who were skeptical of these defenses—notably Angleton and his counterintelligence staff—as "paranoid," indulging in "sick-think" or otherwise out of touch with reality. The Ames case demonstrates that such faith was misplaced.

The KGB clearly had the ability to compromise, recruit, career-manage, service and utilize Ames for an extensive period of time. According to FBI affidavits, Ames had been in illicit liaison with the Soviet intelligence service since at least 1984—and, according to a former CIA counterintelligence executive, he may have been recruited much earlier. Moreover, he had been, while a Soviet mole, head of the CIA's Soviet counterintelligence unit. From this vantage point he could vet the secret information coming into the CIA from its own spies in Russia and tell the KGB what the CIA was learning.

The implications of this case are far-reaching. To begin with, it casts new light on the intellectual provenance of the information supplied to the media by retired KGB officers. For example, Oleg Kalugin, who served as a major-general in the KGB until 1987, was certainly in a position to know the KGB's success in penetrating the CIA. Yet he stated categorically in 1992 that "no responsible politician or government employee was ever recruited by the Soviets in Europe or America in the last twenty years." Kalugin added that the KGB had so little hard currency at its disposal that it had to open up its archives to the foreign media and sell documents to pay its operating expenses abroad. While this picture of KGB ineptitude and poverty has been welcome news inside the CIA, it hardly squared with the millions the KGB was paying to Ames to get leverage over CIA counterintelligence.

More important, Ames's work for the KGB calls into serious question the validity of the secret intelligence derived from Russia in the mid and late 1980s. Ames is

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said to have identified to the KGB the ten CIA agents in the Soviet Union who were supplying the CIA with data. Yet just as a Mafia suspect who found out some of his phones were tapped could use them to mislead the police, the KGB, following the usual practice in counterintelligence, would not immediately arrest the ten sources Ames told them about but would use them to pass misleading information to the CIA. If it controlled all the CIA's sources through Ames, it could assure that each report persuasively dove-tailed with the others. This might explain why the CIA was egregiously wrong in assessing various Soviet capabilities in the mid-1980s.

The Ames revelation also helps to understand some pivotal KGB activities of the 1980s. Consider, for example, Vitaly Yurchenko's short-lived visit to Washington in August 1985. He claimed to be a KGB defector, and Ames, as the relevant CIA counterintelligence officer, was assigned to the debriefing team. Yurchenko identified himself as the deputy chief of the KGB unit specifically responsible for organizing and supervising its espionage against the United States, which conveniently put him in a perfect position to identify KGB recruits in the CIA. Thus the head of the debriefing team immediately asked him whether or not there were any KGB moles presently working in the CIA and offered him, as is the practice, a substantial bonus if he could provide any information to help locate such a mole. Since Ames had already been a mole, Yurchenko, if he were a genuine defector, had a truly golden opportunity. But instead of naming Ames, he insisted falsely (like Kalugin later did) that the KGB had not succeeded in making a single recruit of any CIA officer on active duty. (On the contrary, he diverted attention away from Ames by identifying Edward Lee Howard, a former employee of the CIA, who had contacted the Soviet Embassy, as both the FBI and CIA had already determined from routine surveillance.) After ninety days as a temporary defector—during which time he helped Ames, who was checking out his story, expand his access into such compartments as the NSA's top-secret anti-submarine detection devices in the Pacific—Yurchenko redefected back to Moscow.

The most serious ramification of the Ames case is the indication that he might not have been alone. As one top former CIA counterintelligence officer put it, "moles, like mice, are not often found as singletons." Ames, who had access to counterintelligence files, would be in a position to provide the KGB with a roster of candidates. The ex-CIA officer recalled that in similar mole operations into the intelligence services of West Germany, England and France, the KGB had acted to widen the original penetration by having the initial recruit spot, assess and find vulnerabilities of others in the service. It is assumed that Ames did the same. Moreover, the fact that Ames managed to rise to the head of the CIA's Soviet counterintelligence unit despite his reportedly lackluster performance and, at the same time, avoid all the CIA's security defenses, suggests that he might have had "career management" help on the inside. This possibility is reinforced by the chronology of the payments Ames received from the KGB, as detailed in the FBI affidavits. These payments continued for six years after he had been transferred out of the counterintelligence unit to Rome, to the U.N. in New York and to the CIA's boondocks anti-narcotics unit, where his "need to know" access would be greatly curtailed. In the words of the ex-CIA counterintelligence officer: "The KGB does not pay bonuses of such magnitude on spec." So it appears Ames was able to deliver secrets on the Soviet's shopping list from areas to which he did not have access. Therefore, he must have had help.

For the last two decades, the CIA hoped it could evade this nightmare of moles by such mechanistic means as lie-detector tests. Now that the KGB has succeeded in its conspiratorial enterprise, the CIA again has to confront the issue of protecting itself.

EDWARD JAY EPSTEIN is the author of *Deception: The Invisible War Between the KGB and the CIA* (Simon & Schuster).

Niyazov's nasty reign.

ASHKHABAD GUY

By Anne McElvoy

ASHKHABAD

The vast heaps of red and white flowers cluttering President Saparmurat Niyazov's outer office ensured that it was no easy feat to approach the chief of all Turkmen without tripping over the latest outsize delivery of gladioli. "From voters congratulating the president on his referendum result," beamed the head of the presidential press office, Durdymukhamed Kurbanov, who used to be leader of the opposition party until he recognized the error of his ways. "Today the president is receiving Turkmen journalists," he announced. "They will congratulate him on the outcome and he will congratulate them on their coverage. It would be nice if you could add your good wishes at the beginning of the interview."

You might think that gaining 99.99 percent of the vote in January's referendum on extending his rule might have satisfied the leader of Turkmenistan in his hankering for total adulation. But the man who runs this Central Asian fiefdom in the twin traditions of absolutist and lifelong rule by the prerevolutionary Kahns and the subsequent sway of Communist Party bosses cannot get enough of himself. Weeks after the event, the carefully orchestrated tributes continue to roll in.

President Niyazov appears to be intent on challenging North Korea's Kim Il Sung for the world record in

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having the most streets, schools and factories named after him. He has taken the personality cult to new heights, awarding himself the title "Chief of all Turkmen"; a breed of horse, a canal, a city, ships and several children now bear his name. When he recently suggested canceling plans to celebrate his birthday as a national holiday, deputies rose en masse shouting, "No, No, No!" It was a rare show of dissent. In the space of six months in 1991 Niyazov managed to change the 98 percent vote he had demanded in the spring for staying in the Soviet Union to a 94 percent vote in the fall in favor of leaving it. The latest referendum extends his rule until 2002.

Behind the sinister comedy of dictatorship lurks a soft-spoken, smooth-jowled pragmatist with a canny eye on the future of a tiny country poised between the Russian and Islamic spheres of influence. The longest-serving leader in the former Soviet Union—he came to power as Party boss in 1985—Niyazov has been given a difficult geopolitical hand to play. This is the poorest and most barren of the old republics, with an ill-educated population of 3.5 million. For good measure, it's also saturated by the kind of tribal divisions that have brought civil war to Tajikistan and Afghanistan and threaten to destabilize the region's emerging power, Uzbekistan, next door. Mercifully, independence brought Ashkhabad the windfall of its substantial gas and oil revenues, exploited for decades by Moscow. Breathless officials now speak of the country becoming a second Kuwait. They just hope Russia doesn't turn out to be a second Iraq.

Still, the country remains too poor to stand on its own feet as yet. The need to attract Western funds explains Niyazov's relentless courtship of foreign leaders, including his somewhat troublesome gift to Britain's John Major of an Akal-Teke stallion called Marat. The horse is squat and temperamental—the Tonya Harding of the equine world—and has hooves that fit him for pounding through sand rather than the more staid duties of the London Household Cavalry. Marat has been behaving badly en route to England despite the British embassy in Moscow appointing a "horse attaché" to look after him.

At home, politics remain authoritarian and economics strictly communist. There's free water, which often works for two hours per day; free electricity, but a chronic shortage of light bulbs; and free health care, whose standards are best judged by the fact that Niyazov traveled quietly to the United States earlier this year when he needed a leg operation. His currant-bun eyes darken at suggestions that his rule is hardly democratic. "I understand democracy to mean the will of the majority, not the promotion of discord," he intones. "Of course people are free to choose their opinions as long as these are in the framework of the constitution which guarantees stability and prosperity."

Turkmenistan's "stability" is primarily bedeviled by some difficult regional partners. At the end of February Niyazov ordered that supplies of gas to Ukraine be switched off after Kiev withheld payments to ease its own economic discomfort. It is not a response he would risk with Moscow. "We are brothers," he says of the Russians. And Ukraine? "We are relations but maybe not brothers." The relationship with Russia is not without its strains, of course. The dream of independent new wealth would of course be shattered if Vladimir Zhirinovsky got his way in Moscow. Fear of Russian hegemony runs rife among the Turkmen, who sought protection from Moscow at the end of the eighteenth century because they were hemmed in by hostile Persian, Khivan and Bukharan neighbors. That experience has not been forgotten. The Turkmen admit that their military patrol on the sensitive Iranian border has to borrow officers from the Russian Army because their own soldiers are not experienced enough. Still, that doesn't mean they're not nervous about a full-scale Russian intervention and their former ward's recent imperialist grumblings. Yeltsin's demand that Moscow should have the right to police ethnic conflicts in the region and oversee any economic or defense deal between the Central Asian republics and their Muslim neighbors has increased Ashkhabad's determination to establish its economic independence fast. It's quickly building a gas pipeline through Iran and Turkey to replace the present route through Ukraine and Russia. But this leads to trouble of its own kind as well. Iranian businessmen lounge among the potted plants of hotel lobbies with calculators and Korans on their knees. Recently, the Iranian government placed President Hashemi Rafsanjani's son in charge of the working party on the pipeline. So far, Niyazov has attempted to replicate Turkish secularism—he has ex-Communist censors supervise translations of the Koran—but he's aware that the choice between Russian domination, Islamic revolt and Western capitalism is not exactly an ideal one. Meanwhile, he has decreed that all schoolchildren should learn Turkman, Russian and English—just to be on the safe side of history.

ANNE MCELVOY is the *Times* of London bureau chief in Moscow.

HELSINKI POSTCARD

THE THAW

By Steven Beschloss

When Matts Dumell fell, there was a big noise in Finland. Headlines, debate, a court verdict of high treason. He had passed letters from Denmark to a Russian "friend," and was found guilty in 1982 of spying for the Soviets. He lost his T.V. reporting job, his family, his apartment. He went

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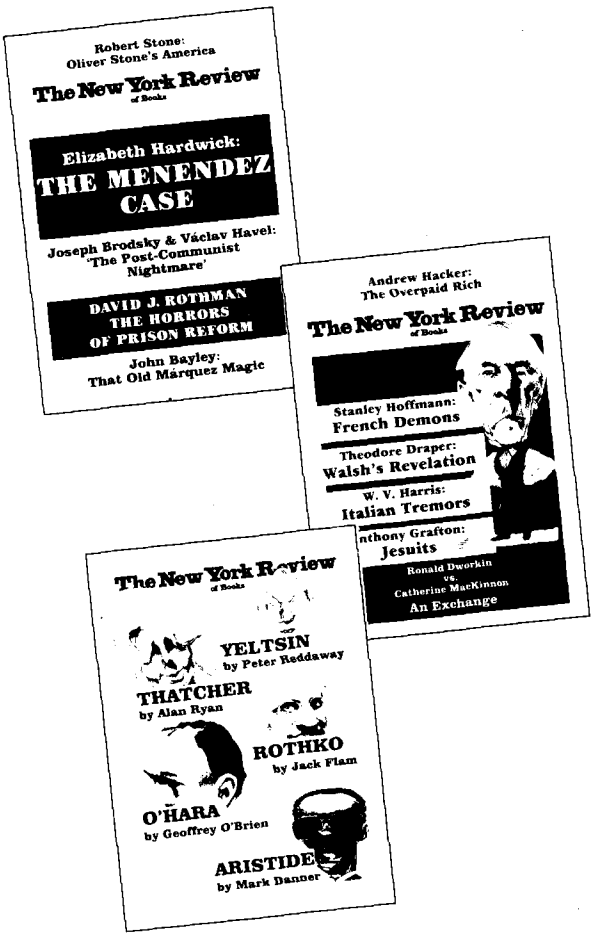

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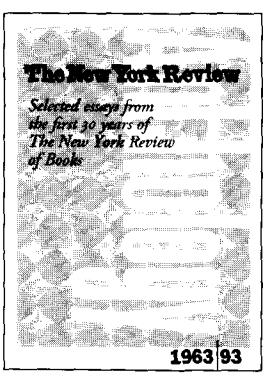

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to prison in 1984 for four months. He didn't know what hit him. How could he? Until then, having a *kotiryssa*, a "personal" Russian, was a guarantee of prestige.

Ten years later, on a bitter winter day, Dumell reluctantly agrees to meet me in a Helsinki cafe across from the Svenska Theater, up the tree-lined Esplanade from a turn-of-the-century, gazebo-style restaurant built by the Russians. A handsome fortysomething man with an ingratiating manner, he is still bothered and bewildered by the whole experience. He blushes, laughs, nervously squeezes an empty wrapper for a last cigarette. Not because he thinks he was guilty of espionage, but because he believed that honesty was the best policy when police arrested him. He also believes that what he did by no means distinguishes him from dozens, probably hundreds, of other Finnish journalists, artists and politicians who regularly traded information, gifts and favors with their Soviet contacts. "Honesty," he confides, leaning close, "never conquered the world."

This is not advice I pass on to the Center Party's Paavo Vayrynen, who faltered in the presidential election that took place earlier this year. During the campaign Vayrynen was plagued by the charge—made by former KGB Chief Viktor Vladimirov—that as foreign minister he gave the Soviets sweetheart deals with Finnish state industries. Though he aggressively denied the accusation, the issue remained a sore spot for many Finns weary of the backroom deal-making and the political careers that depended on Soviet help throughout the quarter-century rule of President Urho Kekkonen, which ended in 1981. Consequently, Vayrynen finished out of the running. (His credibility wasn't helped by his claim that he had read the collected works of Fyodor Dostoyevski in a weekend.) The victor, Social Democrat and former U.N. diplomat Martti Ahtissari, won on his reputation as an internationalist outside day-to-day Finnish politics. "There's a kind of hangover at the moment," says one old Communist pol turned Social Democrat. "Like maybe we talked too much to the Russians—and they used it for their own benefit."

These are uneasy, painful times for many Finnish politicians, especially those who allowed the Soviets to exercise considerable influence on officially neutral Finland's foreign and domestic affairs. (The tiny Nordic country shares an 800-mile border with Russia and has long suffered an inferiority complex because of it.) Now that the Eastern bloc has collapsed, the criticism is coming from within. Last year the Finnish press documented the money flow from the Soviet Communist Party to the Finnish Communist Party, the hard-drinking junkets taken by various Finnish parties on the Soviet tab and even speeches by Finnish politicians that were written with Moscow's input. Historian Timo Vihavainen's 1991 book on "Finlandization," which helped inaugurate a new chapter in Finnish-Russian relations, pulled no punches. Its title: *A Nation Flat on Its Face.*

To get a bead on the strange ways of Finland, I sought out a Russian, which, oddly enough, is not so easy to do here. An autonomous duchy of the Russian empire for more than a century until the Bolshevik Revolution, Finland has the most homogeneous population in Europe. I finally found Inna Rogatchi, a journalist and playwright who came to Finland from Leningrad five years ago. The Finnish countryside was so clean and comforting, and the Finns so kind, that the Rogatchis thought they were in a fairy tale.

Rogatchi wrote a warm book about that first year, *My Finnish Family*, but she gradually began to take a harder look at her new home: at the refusal of Finnish authorities to allow Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago* to be published (the government argued that the Soviets might cut off oil exports); at the pro-Soviet student and youth movement in the '70s that zealously published the *musta kirja*, the black book, which listed intellectual works considered questionable, including Freud. Her worst fears were confirmed last fall when Oleg Gordievsky, the KGB double agent now in London and co-author of *KGB: The Inside Story*, told her that hundreds of "fully-recruited agents" and "confidential contacts"—from President Kekkonen on down—were supplying information well into the '80s. "In the Soviet Union there was the Gulag. It was hard to resist," Rogatchi says sadly. "Here I think it was collaboration for their own profit."

Of course, the country is not without mixed emotions for the days of the Soviet empire. To an American visitor who grew up under the shadow of nuclear Armageddon, it's amazing to discover that there are people who don't remember fearing Soviet aggression. The schizophrenia extends to the younger generation. Last summer 50,000 mostly young people jammed into Helsinki's cobblestone Senate Square for an ironic consecration of the cold war's demise: amid potted palms, the former Soviet Red Army choir came to play and sing with the Leningrad Cowboys, a Finnish rock 'n' roll band that sports comically exaggerated pompadours and wears mock military uniforms. To the embarrassment of many older Finns, the young Finns and old Soviets joined voices for such buoyant anthems as "Happy Together" and "Those Were The Days" (and, in a festive nod to America, "California Girls").

And beyond irony? It may take a longtime Communist from the so-called Stalinist wing, undisturbed by doubt or regret, to reject (self-interestedly?) the new impulse for purging. "During the Soviet Union there was a certain status quo and not just countries falling into turmoil and chaos," Jaakko Laakso says, sitting with me in the grayish-green cafeteria of the Finnish Parliament, where he's been a member since 1976. "I'm not the only one who has good memories for the old days." He complains about journalists who now accuse him of being a Russian spy: "They are the same ones who got help from me."

Laakso was a powerful man. He helped create a youth and student movement that once tallied more than 50,000 members, attracting many of the country's young intellectuals and artists. He experienced Kekkonen's pragmatic "cigar and cognac" diplomacy, joining

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other young radicals at the president's home for an evening that often ended with a chorus of "The Internationale" by the piano. He visited the Soviet Union more than 100 times and organized trips for politicians from across the ideological spectrum; some trips included a thorough physical exam in Moscow followed by a holiday at a Black Sea sanatorium.

Those were incredible times, says Laakso, now a left-wing leader in the Council of Europe. As he shows me out of the Parliament, he tells me he's traveling to China this spring for the first time. He's pleased. Finally, the Chinese are prepared to forgive him for his close ties to the Soviets. His own people, however, may not be quite so generous.

STEVEN BESCHLOSS writes frequently about international affairs.

ON THE HILL

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

By Weston Kosova

For one long day last August, Bob Kerrey made Bill Clinton's life miserable. In the final hours of the frenetic Senate toss-up over the budget, Kerrey withheld his vote until Clinton assured him he would seriously consider making deeper entitlement cuts in the future. Clinton didn't have much choice. Kerrey was the last Democratic holdout in the Senate; without his vote, the bill would have shriveled. So the president agreed, and Kerrey went along with the package. Even then, the Nebraskan cast his vote only after delivering a stern lecture to Clinton on the Senate floor in which he rebuked the president for his spinelessness: "The price of this proposal is too low," Kerrey warned. "It's too little to match the greatness needed from Americans now, at this critical moment in this world's history." Kerrey says he didn't trade his vote for specific cuts. "In the end, when I called the president and told him I was going to vote for it, I said, 'No strings attached.' " Kerrey recalls telling the president, "If you want to do this after the vote, I'd be prepared to do it."

Three months later, he got his wish. In November Clinton said he would sponsor Kerrey's suggestion for a bipartisan presidential commission aimed at finding ways to cut entitlement spending. (Clinton endorsed the commission after learning that Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell liked the idea, too.) On November 5, 1993, the president signed an executive order approving the panel. He tapped Kerrey as chairman and Missouri Senator John Danforth, a Republican, as vice chairman. (Kerrey asked for Danforth: the two had been discussing an entitlements commission ever since Danforth sent Kerrey a note praising his budget speech.) The two senators worked out the details in a meeting at the White House with Clinton, Vice President Al Gore, White House Chief of Staff Mack McLarty, Budget Director Leon Panetta and National Economic Council chief Robert Rubin.

But the momentum stopped there. In its first few months the commission has been plagued by the predictable political bickering that has suffocated so many other efforts to prune government spending. Kerrey hasn't even set a date for its inaugural meeting ("It keeps getting put off, and put off," says one Democratic Senate staffer), and already there are signs that the whole thing may collapse long before December, when Kerrey and Danforth are supposed to report the panel's findings to the administration.

The trouble began when Clinton chose to name Kerrey and Danforth to lead the commission. The panel was supposed to include ten members from the House and ten from the Senate, chosen by the leaders in each house and divided evenly along party lines. Clinton would pick an additional ten people from outside Congress—mayors, former governors, CEOs—for a total of thirty. By putting Kerrey and Danforth on the commission himself, Clinton had angered Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole and House Minority Leader Bob Michel, who took the move as a sign that the president intended to impose his choices on them. In retaliation, Dole threatened to exclude Danforth from his list of five Republican senators, thereby forcing Clinton to expend one of his ten picks on the Missouri Republican. "Dole and Michel got very upset," Kerrey says. "They said, 'You know, you haven't talked to us about this, and we're concerned about having enough Republican representation on it. And if it's going to be a Democratic deal then make it a Democratic deal, but if you want a bipartisan effort then we have to be a part of it.' " Not to be slighted, Mitchell in turn threatened to exclude Kerrey from his choice of five Democrats.

Clinton broke up the fight in classic Clinton fashion: he expanded the commission by two members to allow for Kerrey and Danforth. In response to Dole's accusations that he was trying to pack the panel with liberals, the president agreed to let the Republican leadership review his choices. Michel and House Minority Whip Newt Gingrich demanded that the commission's original reporting date—May—be pushed back until December, after the 1994 midterm elections, thereby taking any entitlement cuts off the table until the 1996 fiscal year. Clinton agreed. And Kerrey backed him: "The House guys just said, 'Look, if you want courage, you can't expect us to do this in the middle of an election cycle. You just can't. It's unrealistic.' "

The roster of commissioners that has emerged from the turf wars is not inspiring. "I don't see on the commission more than a handful of people who are anxious

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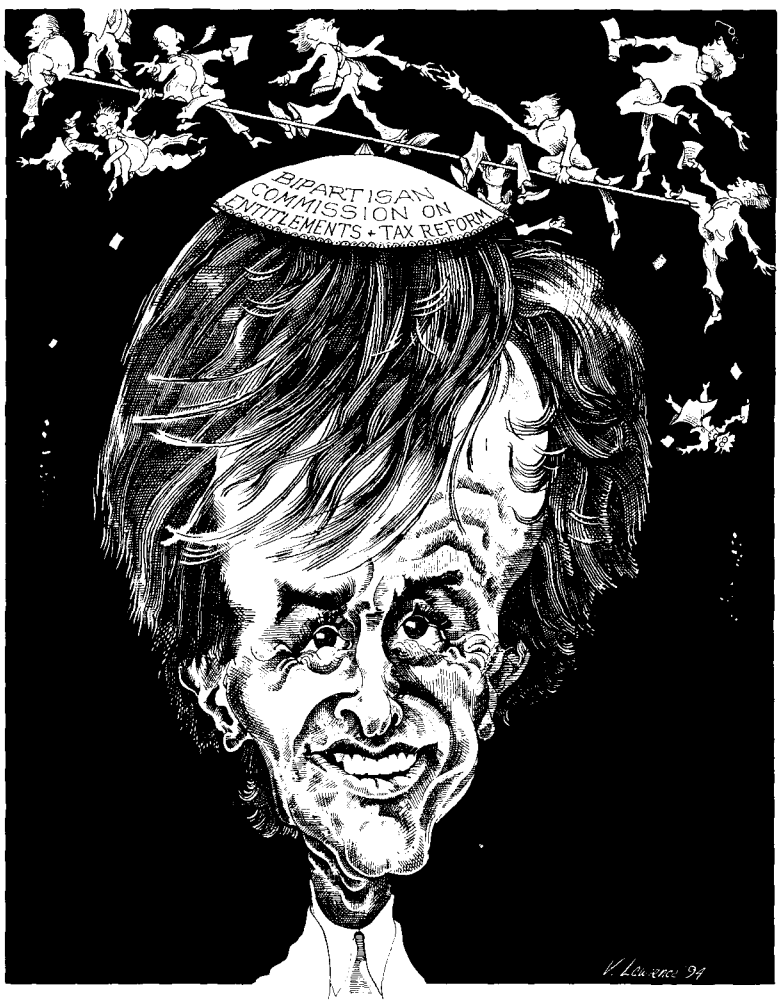
to deal with the entitlement question," says Democratic Representative Tim Penny, co-author of the failed Penny-Kasich budget-cutting bill. Instead of picking ardent budget-cutters, the congressional leadership bowed to political expediency and larded the commission with members of congressional committees that have jurisdiction over the budget (and who are better-known for their spending than for their cutting). For example, there's Senate Budget Committee Chairman Jim Sasser; Pete Domenici, ranking minority member of the Senate Budget Committee; Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee member Carol Moseley-Braun; House Budget Committee Chairman Martin Sabo; House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman John Dingell; and House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dan Rostenkowski. None can be called a deficit hawk; but all would have been ruffled if they had been left off the panel.



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Convincing the commission's members to support unpopular potential reforms such as means testing, pushing back retirement ages and freezing cost of living adjustments for Social Security and Medicare may be impossible, a problem that isn't lost on either Kerrey or Danforth. "I'm willing to risk one stick of chewing gum that we'll be successful at touching Social Security," Danforth says, only half jokingly. Kerrey is slightly more optimistic. He says the commission will probably manage to agree on at least a few worthwhile proposals. Even so, he intends to test how far his colleagues are willing to go. Over the next two months the group will try to rough out a preliminary set of reforms they can all agree on. Kerrey knows he may be disappointed. "It may be that we find ourselves unable to produce a reality check document," Kerrey says. "In which case maybe we'll just say, 'Well, we've got to go home. We can't waste the taxpayer's money with this commission to do that.' "

If Kerrey doesn't pull the plug on the commission, there's still a chance Clinton might. The president is ambivalent about entitlement cuts and hasn't committed himself to supporting the group's recommendations. If anything, he has tried to distance himself from the commission. For example, instead of handing over its recommendations to Budget Director Leon Panetta, Clinton ordered that the commission report to Robert Rubin, head of the NEC, a Cabinet "status" agency.

Losing Clinton's support is Kerrey's worst nightmare. Without presidential backing, virtually none of the commission's congressional members would endorse risky cuts. Last fall, during the wrangling over who would sit on the commission, Kerrey worried that Clinton's enthusiasm was waning. He threatened to walk away from the project unless Clinton demonstrated his support by unveiling the commission in a White House press conference. Clinton delivered, in the Roosevelt Room on February 10. But his endorsement was conditional: "This commission will be asked to grapple with real issues of entitlement reforms, not caps or gimmicks that defer hard choices, but specific and constructive proposals. And we will take very seriously proposals that have strong bipartisan support."

Given his uneasiness on the issue, why did Clinton back the commission in the first place? For one thing, it gives him political cover. Whenever the sticky subject of entitlement cuts comes up, he can honestly say he's looking into it. That's especially important now, with health care legislation looming. Because it won't report until December, any cuts in Medicare and Medicaid that the commission might recommend will be neatly out of the way until next year—after health care reform is underway. Clinton also wanted to fulfill the promise he made to Kerrey during the budget follies. But considering the grief the commission has given Kerrey, there may be another, less high-minded, motivation behind Clinton's largess: "If I were conspiracy-minded," says one House Republican staffer, "I would say that Clinton did it to get even." •

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The spotted owl: an environmental parable.

THE BIRDS

By Gregg Easterbrook

Recently, I rather casually did something that according to contemporary environmental orthodoxy is inconceivable: I took a hike through the woods and saw lots of spotted owls. Spotted owls are said to be so rare that even an experienced forester spends weeks trying to glimpse one. I saw four in a few hours. The owls were living wild in a habitat where it is presumed impossible for them to exist: a young woodland, not an old-growth forest. And they were living in a place, California, where environmental doctrine holds spotted owls to be rare birds indeed.

In the evolution of political issues there often comes a sequence that runs like this: A new concern arises. For a while the system attempts to deny the claim's validity, but eventually some action is taken. By then advocates have become an interest group, fighting as much for the preservation of their cause as anything else. The fight takes on a life of its own; the specifics of the original issue are discarded.

Today this sequence may be repeating in the matter of the spotted owl. A decade ago researchers warned that the bird was declining toward extinction. Legal gears were set spinning. In 1991 a federal judge suspended most Northwest logging, resulting in the loss of thousands of high-wage jobs. This month the Clinton administration is set to file court documents that make most of those losses permanent. The Clinton owl plan has become a standard Washington lobbying jangle in which business and environmental constituencies drop sixteen-ton weights on each others' heads. The original question of whether the owl is endangered has been discarded. At the White House level, that isn't even discussed anymore. Political and legal maneuvers continue on the assumption that 1980s studies hypothesizing an owl extinction were correct.

They may not be. Research is beginning to suggest that the spotted owl exists in numbers far greater than was assumed when the extinction alarm sounded. Whereas a headline-making 1986 Audubon Society report said that 1,500 spotted owl pairs throughout the United States was the number necessary to prevent extinction, it now seems that as many as 10,000 pairs may exist. "It appears the spotted owl population is not in as bad a shape as imagined ten years ago, or even five years ago," says David Wilcove, a biodiversity expert for the Environmental Defense Fund. Thus Clinton's plan to shut down most Washington and Oregon logging may not only be unnecessary; it may be resting on an illusion.

The illusion of a pending owl extinction is a parable of modern environmentalism, illustrating both its manifest virtues and the internal faults that, uncorrected, could bring it down. The owl fixation has its political virtues: it's an issue easily understood by the public; it graphically illustrates the genuine need for old-growth forest preservation; and it has allowed environmentalism to win numerous battles against the government and the logging industry. Also, as a direct-mail fundraising tool, the little feathered creature cannot be beat; as a symbol of endangered species, the owl can help protect many others that are not so cuddly and not so popular. In all these areas, the movement has its heart in the right place.

Its head is another matter. To serious environmentalists, the owl dispute has become a proxy for the goal of preserving old-growth forests. In private many enviros acknowledge that owl extinction claims have been extensively pressurized with hot air. They justify this on the grounds that a valid goal, old-growth forest preservation, is served. Indeed, old-growth preservation is important for the protection of biodiversity, for conservation of what remains of America's pre-European heritage, and against the prospect that ancient forests may someday be understood to play an irreplaceable ecological role of which men and women are not yet aware. These are ample reasons why logging in the Pacific Northwest should be closely regulated.

Yet an argument based on forest preservation for its own sake would, in the long run, be stronger than specious species arguments. After all, if conservation rules are based on an owl extinction claim that research someday disproves, why shouldn't hell-bent logging resume? Whether spotted owls are really endangered raises the whole question of whether conservation can

GREGG EASTERBROOK is a contributing editor at *Newsweek*. This article is based on material from *A Moment on the Earth*, which will be published next year by Viking.

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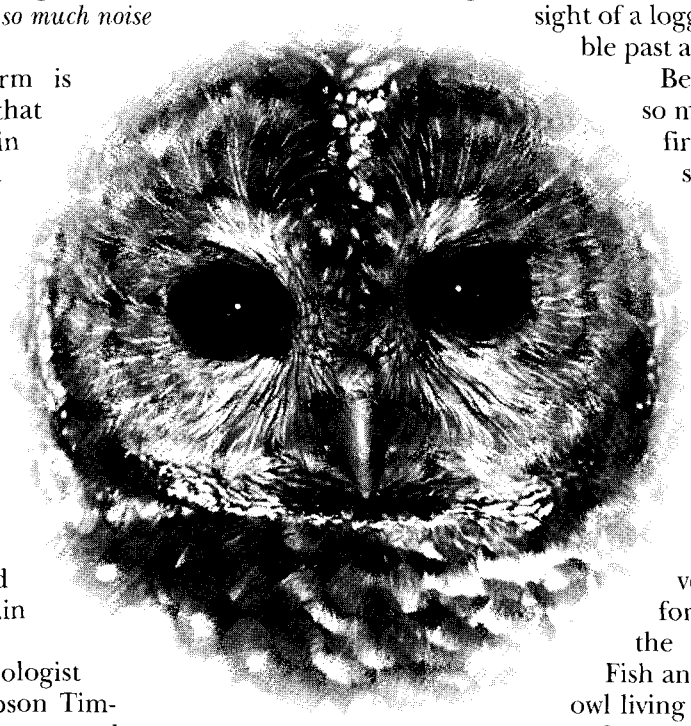
be placed on a secure, rational foundation that outlives alarmist fads.

"I know they're here," said Lowell Diller as he and I stood in the gathering dusk in a redwood glade outside the forest town of Eureka, California. We had hiked to a spot where Diller had previously marked a nest. For fifteen minutes he hooted to summon the owl pair that lived there. Though we saw no shadows moving in the near-dark, Diller was convinced that the owls were observing the intrusion by genus *homo*.

Suddenly, no more than fifteen feet away, furry outlines resolved into view. Two spotted owl had conducted their flying approach through a dense forest understory without making any sound audible to us. The owls, who doubtless heard our clumsy footsteps a mile off, regarded us, perhaps wondering, *How can these bipeds survive when they make so much noise in the forest?*



The owl extinction alarm is predicated on two notions: that spotted owl live only in ancient forests, and that a last, fragile, dwindling population of the northern spotted exists mainly in Oregon and Washington. New research suggests that neither notion is true. California does not end at the Golden Gate; between there and the Oregon border lies a 300-mile corridor of mostly Sierra Nevada forest. This vast woodland, ignored in the owl debate, may contain a profusion of spotted owl.

Diller is a wildlife biologist employed by the firm Simpson Timber. In 1990 he began to survey a northern California tract of medium-age, "managed" timberland owned by that company. Since then, he has found and banded 603 spotted owls. Federal documents assume that only 653 owl pairs exist in the whole of California, and that essentially none lives in private timberland. Diller's 603 owls were found by inspection of a small snippet of the Sierra Nevada. Most California woodlands have never been surveyed for owls.

The primary federal document on which the Northwest logging ban is based assumes that "somewhere between 3,000 and 4,000" pairs of spotted owls exist in the United States. Last year Steven Self and Thomas Nelson, researchers employed by Sierra Pacific, a timber company with a progressive reputation, estimated that California alone is home to between 6,000 and 8,000 spotted owl pairs. Of course, the efforts of Diller, Self and Nelson are backed by industry, which has a financial stake in debunking owl alarms. But then, works of owl pessimism, such as the Audubon report, have been backed by advocacy groups with a financial stake in advancing the same alarms.

Federal spotted owl research has concentrated on Oregon and Washington, the states with the mature, monocultural Douglas fir stands traditionally assumed to be the bird's exclusive habitat. Diller is among the first researchers to look for spotted owl in California. "If research had started in California, the spotted owl would not now be considered endangered," he says.

A significant aspect of Diller's work is that he finds spotted owl reproducing in young woodlands managed by foresters, areas environmental doctrine presumes the bird cannot abide. "The northern spotted owl rarely if ever successfully fledges young from any habitat except old-growth," the Audubon Society declared in 1988. One active nest Diller showed me was not only in a tree glade of medium height and age but was within sight of a logging road where trucks rumble past almost daily.

Because Diller has turned up so many owls, his work has backfired on his employer. Simpson Timber has had to file plans that place about 50,000 of its acres into pure preservation status and to restrict company logging in other ways, since tree harvests that might "take" a spotted owl are essentially forbidden even on private land. Meanwhile, Diller's findings have inspired others to begin systematic owl surveys of the vast northern California forest. Agencies such as the California Department of Fish and Game have found spotted owl living and reproducing in several types of non-ancient woodlands, including oak savannas—low-tree habitats unlike any in the Cascade Range of Washington and Oregon.

How can the spotted owl thrive in California forests that are not ancient? One answer may be that young woods are more alive than old ones. Serene Cascade old-growth stands are places of beauty and abiding significance, but they have a little secret environmentalists would rather not discuss: floors of ancient forests, though rich with diversity, know a relatively low level of life. When tall trees close the "canopy" of an old Douglas fir stand, direct sunlight ceases to reach the understory. Thus plants grow slowly; thus there are fewer seeds to sustain small mammals; thus there are fewer small mammals for predators such as the spotted owl.

Spotteds in Washington and Oregon prey mainly on flying squirrels, whose Cascades population is relatively low. In California, spotteds prey mainly on the dusky-footed wood rat. California's managed woodlands have sunlight on the forest floor, because foresters space and

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whose diversity of faith, ethnicity and race unites us in a common campaign against bigotry.

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who know the rights and dignity of all of us are jeopardized when those of any of us are challenged.

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trim trees to maximize yield. The warm climate further encourages plant growth. The result is forests with lots of food for small mammals and lots of wood rats.

California woodlands of past centuries may not have had the lush understory now observed. A 1900 Interior Department survey describes natural northern California forests as "rarely if ever dense" and "characteristically open." Though environmental orthodoxy calls timberlands "managed deserts," contemporary timberlands in California have understories so heavily vegetated that they're hard merely to hike through. These dense understories support lots of rodents—and therefore lots of owls. "It's possible there are now more spotted owl in California than before the white man arrived," says Edward Murphy, a forester for Sierra Pacific.

Environmentalists reject such thinking on two grounds. First, they say owls in young California forests are "packed"—driven there by logging of old-growth, sure to die prematurely. This is possible, yet it seems unlikely given that current California owl surveys did not begin until half a century after the timber industry entrenched itself in that state. If owls packed by logging expire, the California spotted should have passed into oblivion by now. Environmentalists also assert that spotteds are an old-growth "obligate," hyperspecialized to the canopy of mature forests. Again, this is possible. Yet it goes against most of what is known about natural selection. A few vertebrates, such as the panda, have become so specialized that they exist solely in a narrow habitat. Most creatures have some genetic ability to adjust to conditions, because environmental conditions have been constantly changing throughout their evolution. The old-growth forests of the Cascade Range did not pop into existence complete with hyperspecialized owls. Those forests evolved from earlier forms. For millennia, some spotted owls must have existed in conditions other than serene old-growth. After all, nature "logs" too, through lightning-induced fires that take down mature trees and replace them with saplings exactly as timber companies do.

Pessimists portray the spotted owl as an old-growth obligate because under this view the bird is a fragile waif, unable to withstand the slightest variation in habitat. But species that cannot withstand change usually perish anyway, even if they are protected by federal law. In the more likely case that the owl has some ability to adapt, the bird lives but the doomsday claims die—a horrible outcome for environmental dogma.

In 1976, shortly after the Endangered Species Act became law, an Oregon State graduate student named Eric Forsman published a master's thesis saying spotted owls of Oregon were "declining as a result of habitat loss." The study caused a sensation among enviros, who were looking for an Endangered Species test case. Also in 1976, in a bonehead decision of epic proportions, clear-cutting was legalized on Forest Service land. Clear-cutting meant rapid reductions of the "unharvested old-growth conifer forests" where Forsman found most spotted owl.

Enviros were right to be incensed. In one of modern government's leading inanities, the Forest Service uses tax funds to subsidize money-losing clear-cutting on public lands that often adjoin private timber tracts harvested at a profit, without subsidies, using selection logging—an ecologically responsible practice that generates more jobs. Though clear-cutting can be defended in a few circumstances, selection logging and the related shelter-cutting, in which trees are removed in clumps so the forest canopy remains, are generally superior both for habitat preservation and sustained timber income.

Forsman's notion of an owl drop in Oregon is unassailable. Although Oregon and Washington today contain about 7 million acres of primal old-growth forest, an area larger than Vermont, ancient forests there were slicked off from roughly the 1940s to the 1980s much faster than they could regrow. Fewer forest acres means fewer forest creatures, including owls. Yet while Forsman's paper is celebrated as a founding text of owl doomsaying, he did not assert that the spotted owl was falling extinct. Indeed, he found some of what Diller has found: birds living successfully in young timberlands, suggesting that "owls could tolerate harvest activity" so long as clear-cutting is not employed. Another reason spotted owls may be plentiful in northern California is that clear-cutting has rarely been practiced there. Most Sierra Nevada logging is by selection or shelter cuts. Can it be coincidence that the owls of the Northwest began the decline detected by Forsman at the same point that the government sanctioned clear-cutting on federal lands there? A fair reading of Forsman's early papers suggests that if clear-cutting were restricted and Northwest logging were reduced, owl populations would rebound naturally as forest acreage did. This reasonable avenue of escape from the owls-vs.-loggers mess is depicted as a sham by green orthodoxy, which holds that the sole hope for the Northwest forest is to have nearly zero commercial activity. Yet forest rebounds in the midst of commercial activity have been the pattern throughout the United States and Western Europe.

Deforestation commenced in the United States roughly two centuries ago in New England, as timber was cut or woods were burned for cropland. About a century ago destructive logging practices began to end in New England, while cropland began to be returned to forest as the stirrings of high-yield agriculture reduced the acres needed for cultivation. New Hampshire was 50 percent forest in about 1850; it is now 86 percent forest, though its population has expanded sixfold. Massachusetts was 35 percent forest about 1850 and is now 59 percent forest.

Likewise, the Southeast began to be deforested about century ago and then to reforest about half a century ago. Today the Southeast has far more forested acres than prewar, despite a population boom. Deforestation peaked in Western Europe prewar, then was supplanted by aforestation; today the European Union nations have

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more forest than fifty years ago, though their human population has nearly doubled. Because the Pacific Northwest was the last place in the United States to which determined logging spread, the deforestation trough there was not reached until the 1980s, at the low point for sanctioned clear-cutting. But in that decade Northwest timber firms began planting far more trees than they cut; the reforestation cycle commenced. So long as future logging is held at sustainable levels, the Northwest forest is likely to exhibit the rapid recovery observed everywhere else in the developed world.

Formal warning of spotted owl extinction was not tendered until the 1986 Audubon report said that the spotted owl population was teetering toward the doomsday number of 1,500 pairs. In the report's wake, the northern spotted was "listed" under the Endangered Species Act. Coincident to the listing, a government science panel headed by biologist Jack Ward Thomas concluded that federal policy should ensure that a minimum of 3,000 owl pairs are protected. In 1991 federal Judge William Dwyer banned most logging in Oregon and Washington to assure survival of 3,000 owl pairs. At this point the notion of owl doomsday locked in legally. It has not been questioned since.

There were numerous high-level meetings in the Bush White House on the logging ban, leading to various fumbled initiatives that did nothing to shake Dwyer's order. Shortly after taking office, Bill Clinton staged a theatrical "owl summit" in Portland. He proposed a plan that would allow some logging in Washington and Oregon for a few years (basically through his 1996 re-election bid), then eliminate most Northwest timber commerce in perpetuity. Clinton's final plan is due to be submitted to Judge Dwyer this month.

Forsman's studies, the Audubon warning, the Thomas report, Dwyer's ruling, the Clinton plan—all share something important in common. They all believe Oregon to be the center of the spotted owl universe, with California containing hardly any of the birds.

Thomas, whose owl gloom work won him national standing among environmentalists, was recently named by Clinton as the first biologist to head the Forest Service. Placing a biologist in charge of the agency is an excellent idea, since protection of biodiversity should be a higher government priority than the felling of trees. But will doomsday thinking serve the Forest Service any better than its previous adoration of the chainsaw? "It may well be that there are a significant number of northern spotted owl on private lands in California, but so what?" Thomas told me. "The injunction controls the issue now." Dwyer's injunction discusses the need to preserve old-growth habitat generally, but its legal power derives from the presumption of an owl emergency, a notion neither environmental orthodoxy nor the Clinton administration wishes to disturb with inconveniently positive findings from the field.

Further overlooked is the existence of birds called "California" spotted owls. Since researchers have never surveyed for the California owl in methodical fashion, its population is not well-known. Estimates place its numbers in the low thousands of pairs.

According to environmental doctrine, the fact that the Golden State contains many California spotteds has nothing to do with the "northern" owl extinction alarm because the breeds are disjunct. Yet the birds live in proximity and appear so nearly identical that even ornithologists have difficulty telling them apart. In 1990 ornithologist George Barrowclough, of the American Museum of Natural History in New York, and biologist Ralph Gutierrez, of Humboldt State University in Arcata, California, compared chromosome fragments from the northern and California spotteds. "No genetic difference was found" between the two, their report states. They further noted no significant difference between DNA samples of northern and "Mexican" spotteds, the Mexican spotted being another bird strikingly similar to its Cascade kin. The Mexican spotted roosts in the scrub desert of the Southwest and Mexico, an utterly different place from the moist, old-growth forests doomsayers describe as the sole imaginable habitat for northern spotteds. Barrowclough is now using genome sequencing to determine whether there are subtle DNA distinctions between the northern and California owls that were missed by the first assay. But it's worth noting that Barrowclough calls both bird types "Pacific Coast" spotted owls, reflecting a feeling the two soon may be seen as one and the same.

This seemingly abstract point of ornithology has tremendous bearing on the owl debate. All biologists concur that small, isolated groups are more prone to extinction than large populations spread over a range of habitats. If the owls of Washington and Oregon are a lonely breed, the odds of peril rise. But if those birds belong to a large genetic family existing in a range of habitats spread over the 1,500 miles from Vancouver to Mexico, it becomes unlikely that any local owl population downtrend will lead like a child on a slide to an unstoppable descent. And if the northern and California spotteds are really both "Pacific Coast" birds, there may be 10,000 or more pairs of these raptors in the United States—4,000 to 6,000 northern owls in California, 2,000 to 3,000 northern owls in the Northwest and a few thousand California owls in California.

Does 10,000 pairs of spotted owl sound perilously small? Not only is this far more birds than environmentalists have described as necessary to assure spotted owl survival; it is significantly greater than the nadirs of similar raptors that avoided extinction. The American bald eagle was down to 417 known nesting pairs in 1963 and now has recovered sufficiently that it soon may be "delisted" from endangered status. The peregrine falcon was down to about 1,000 breeding pairs in North America two decades ago and has bounced back to an estimated 5,000; delisting of the subspecies that lives in Alaska is anticipated. Banning of DDT was essential to both birds' comebacks. Recent Forest Service decisions essentially banning most clear-

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cutting should have a similar positive effect on the owl.

If there are approximately 10,000 pairs of spotted owl of the Pacific Coast type, this number may not differ materially from the level that existed before the white male. Many territorial or top-chain predators, such as owls or grizzly bears, are few in number under natural circumstances because they monopolize a wide prey range. Biologists believe that the ancient forests of the Northwest can support at most one spotted owl pair roughly every 1,000 to 7,000 acres. This suggests that even if no Northwest old-growth tree had ever been felled, the region's spotted owl population might be only a few thousand pairs higher than today, as the natural owls-per-acre factor would impose a low limit on total owl numbers. If a moderate decline in owl numbers has occurred because of logging, it would surely be a cause for concern, but not for sennets of instant doomsday.

Many biologists are uncomfortable with claims of a thriving owl cohort in California. Gutierrez, for one, thinks the reason spotteds are being found in California timberlands is that most "contain a remnant of ancient forest, which sustains the owls. Once those remnants are logged out the owls will die." Gutierrez believes Diller uses techniques that double-count owls. He has also examined the statistical assumptions of the Sierra Pacific study. Applied to a small California old-growth preserve called Willow Creek, these assumptions predict 108 spotted owls. Gutierrez's surveys show Willow Creek to be home to seventy-two owls. "This means the optimists are too optimistic by a third," he says.

But suppose Gutierrez is right. Reducing the optimistic estimate by one-third still leaves northern California with 4,000 to 5,400 spotted owl pairs, giving that state more of the birds than Endangered Species Act documents presume exist in the entire country.

In December 1993 a group of owl biologists whose work supports emergency alarms gathered at Colorado State University to debate whether owl estimates are too low. The meeting concluded that for spotted owls, "the population loss rate is accelerating." Environmentalists have since been campaigning to discredit Diller's work on the grounds that it has not yet been peer-reviewed by disinterested scientists (Diller says he will not be ready for peer review until summer) and that it is contradicted by the findings of the better-known researchers who met at Colorado State. But the Colorado State conclusions have not yet been peer-reviewed, either. And the Colorado State report ends by recommending an increase in government funding to researchers whose owl studies are pessimistic—suggesting that they, like industry-backed biologists, are not without a financial stake in their views.

Perhaps anticipating that findings about California owls will be substantiated, environmentalists are shifting their rhetoric. Until recently they spoke mainly of total owl numbers. Now they have begun to assert that owl numbers are less important than the demographic trend; that is, actual birds counted in the laboratory of nature mean less than prospective birds projected by computer model. The Dwyer logging ban accepts this logic, calling computer-projected trends more important than actual owl numbers. This is a quizzical judgment. For more than a decade pessimistic owl studies have been projecting population trends of around -5 percent annually, suggesting that total spotted owl numbers should have fallen drastically by now. Yet actual field surveys continue to find more of the birds than previously counted. Todd True, an attorney for the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund, says that "numbers of owls in the woods" aren't the issue: "Inevitably as researchers look for owls they will find more than we knew about before anyone was looking. If the demographic trend is negative the species is still in trouble."

True's point has merit. A species might be imperiled even if its population seems profuse, as the human species has uncountable troubles despite robust numbers. But there is a problem for owl doomsday orthodoxy: the northern spotted owl is not a species.

According to the American Ornithologists' Union, which certifies bird types, the "northern" spotted owl is a "subspecies." Only the spotted owl generally is a species, *strix occidentalis* to taxonomists. As a species the spotted ranges from northerns that live as far north as British Columbia to Mexicans roosting south of the Rio Grande. Thus even if the spotted ceased to exist entirely in Washington and Oregon, the species line would go forward in many other places.

Yet for the purposes of the Endangered Species Act, the spotted of Washington and Oregon is treated as if it were a species. The Act mandates protection of habitats and "locally distinct" populations, interpreted to mean subspecies living in a manner different from how kin live elsewhere.

Environmentalists hold that even if many spotted owl thrive in California, logging bans must continue in Washington and Oregon because owl populations there are locally distinct; the birds roost in cool climates feeding on arboreal squirrels, a "distinct" Northwest delicacy. This is probably an accurate reading of the Endangered Species Act as written, but it points to a deep logical fault in environmental orthodoxy. If local variations in climate and diet convert creatures to different species, a black man who lives in Seattle, gets rained on and eats salmon would be a different species from a white man who lives in stifling humidity in Louisiana and dines on gumbo. By this theory the human race contains hundreds of species. The sort of people likely to be environmentalists maintain that when it comes to genus *homo*, all individuals of all origins are exactly the same in genetic heritage. Yet when it comes to animals, the tiniest distinction renders apparently identical living things irrevocably separate species. The typical northern and California spotted owls look and act more alike than the typical black American and white African. But according to politically correct dogma, different people are identical while similar birds are drastically different.

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This kind of upside-down logic is important to political environmentalism because Congress will soon debate reauthorization of the Endangered Species Act. If the most famous candidate for extinction is not dying after all, how will the lobbying be kept correctly pessimistic? Two poles of possibility exist for the act. Reactionaries hope to eviscerate it. Progressives would switch the act from its cumbersome creature-by-creature approach to a rationalized system in which blocs of habitat are placed in preservation status but species vacillations within those blocs do not trigger legal panics, since vacillations happen in nature anyway. Environmental orthodoxy wants the act renewed in its effective but panic-oriented form. For this, a continuing owl emergency is a political essential.

Could it be that spotted owls are not endangered but other old-growth species are? Perhaps the replacement of many old-growth forests with young timberlands has caused a wipe-out among creatures harder to count than owls. Current environmental thinking holds that deforestation is the worst form of human activity from the standpoint of biodiversity loss. And there is no doubt that until roughly the past decade, Northwest timber companies slicked off the Cascade Range without regard for conservation. Since the 1991 logging suspension, environmentalists' legal maneuvers have concentrated on expanding the ban's scope to protect some 1,400 non-owl species presumed to be imperiled old-growth obligates. Yet with the exception of Pacific salmon types—whose recent runs have been unequivocal disasters, though perhaps for mainly natural reasons—only a handful of the presumably imperiled obligates has been shown to exhibit worrisome population trends. And thus far there are no known extinctions of animals or vascular plants in the forest regions of Washington, Oregon or California, according to The Nature Conservancy and the Environmental Defense Fund. A half-dozen plants are "missing in action" (not observed recently, though known to prosper elsewhere) and mammals such as the red vole and fisher are believed to be declining in population—but so far, no known postwar extinctions. This in a habitat range that has not only been subjected to extensive logging but also numbers among the most intensely studied in the world and is therefore a place where extinctions are likely to be detected. Combined with the prospect that there are many more spotted owl pairs than previously estimated, this raises the question of whether the owl doomsday, which has cost thousands of honest people their livelihoods and occupied the attention of presidents, is at heart a false alarm.

In contrast, the need to preserve forests is no false alarm. Broad agreement exists among researchers that old-growth woodlands require respite from the indiscriminate logging of the postwar era. Unregulated logging left Northwest forests "fragmented"—containing lots of trees, but in blocks chopped into checkerboards. An emerging body of science holds that forest fragmentation imperils biodiversity. For instance, studies suggest that moderate numbers of spotted owl in contiguous "clusters" would be more secure than twice as many owls in fragmented forests. This alone is reason for strict regulation of Northwest logging.

But the clear need for strict regulation of forestry should be argued on its own merits, not by resorting to dubious claims of owl peril. Consider that Jerry Franklin, a University of Washington researcher and the leading proponent of "New Forestry," drove timber companies to distraction in the 1980s by saying that to protect biodiversity and achieve sustainable yield, Northwest logging must decline to one-half the '80s peak rate. Until quite recently, Franklin was the left wing of the debate. Now, responding to the hypothesized owl emergency, Clinton proposes to reduce Northwest logging to 20 percent of the '80s peak.

Consider that as U.S. timber production declines, demand for foreign timber escalates. Many countries will import more wood from nations such as Malaysia and Brazil, where forestry may be summarized by the cry "TIMMM-BURRR!" Today, Japanese firms are slicking off the lush Sarawak rain forest in Malaysia to feed a global wood market energized by U.S. logging bans. In the Sarawak there are no niceties about sustainable yield or protection of species, and there are no well-funded litigators to sue the irresponsible. Moving logging from Oregon to Malaysia may shift the problem out of sight and out of mind. But it is not much of a deal for the environment.

Consider that anti-logging sentiment born of the desire to protect old-growth stands requiring centuries to restore now spills over into activism against logging in young forests easily restored. In 1990 a California ballot initiative nearly banned most logging even on tree plantations. Yet when commercial forestry produces ample tree harvests, the pressure to log out ancient forests declines. "High-yield forestry can work in concert with old-growth preservation," says Michael Oppenheimer, chief scientist for the Environmental Defense Fund.

Consider that from 9,500 (the White House's own number) to 85,000 jobs will be abrogated by the Clinton owl plan. The lost jobs are high-wage employment of the sort that Americans who aren't lawyers or consultants need to send their children to college. Lumber prices have also nearly doubled since the 1991 ban was imposed, adding roughly $5,000 to the price of a new home. This increase is regressive, hitting the working class much harder than the elite environmentalist class.

If it is eventually understood that affluent environmentalists with white-collar sinecure destroyed thousands of desirable skilled-labor jobs in order to satisfy an ideology and boost the returns on fund-raising drives, a long-lasting political backlash against environmentalism will set in. There is still time to avoid this turn of events. Ancient forests can be protected, additional timber jobs restored and the constructive political power of environmentalism sustained. Honesty about owls would be the beginning. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Speaking in Tongues

Ken Loach, the celebrant of the English working class, used subtitles in his last film, *Riff-Raff*, to help us with the arcane speech of the people in the story. Why didn't Loach retain that simple, useful device for his latest? **Raining Stones** (Northern Arts), set in northern England, is incomprehensible half the time. And yet....

The shape of the story is so lucid that watching the film is, much of the time, like watching an opera performance in a foreign language: if we've read a synopsis, we're all right. With Loach, we don't need a synopsis because we can understand half and fill in the rest. Obviously, as subtitled operas on T.V. prove, it's immeasurably better to know the smallest details; and obviously (I hope) I'm not arguing for semi-incomprehensibility. Still, *Raining Stones* is a teaser. I can't even explain the title: someone says something about "raining stones seven days a week," and I couldn't get the rest of the remark. Yet the selves and the quandaries of the principal people are so vivid that the picture holds.

Bob, a workingman with wife and child, is unemployed. He and his friend Tommy are city folk, but we first see them out on the moors stealing a sheep, which they then sell to a butcher in town for disappointing money. While Bob is trying to peddle some of the mutton, his van is stolen. He must have a van to get about and find work, so he borrows money from loan sharks to buy another. He doesn't find work and can't keep up the loan payments. The sharks are criminals; they move in on Bob, heavily.

What keeps us watching this unsurprising story are the characters and the texture of their lives—in their homes, their pubs, their (Catholic) church. Loach is clearly more interested in people than in stories: he just wants enough story, as supplied by Jim Allen's screenplay, to keep his characters in motion. Conditions, circumstances, the possibilities of reasonable hope—for people with limited access to hope—these are Loach's prime concerns.

And they would be enough, in hands like his, but Loach insures our interest with humor. Tommy, Bob's friend, played with helplessness and ingenuity by Ricky Tomlinson (who was in *Riff-Raff*), accompanies him pretty much throughout, chubby, ebullient, in the same sea of troubles as Bob but using jokes as water wings.

Presumably Loach put a lot of local people in small roles. Even his leading actors, though good, are not really professionals: they've done some acting here and there. He seems to take his approach from the Italian neo-realists of the postwar years, and it's crystallized by the confidence he obviously inspires in his people and the unobtrusive deftness with which he films them.

It's odd to be recommending a picture that can't be entirely understood, but Bob and friends are so engaging that we soon begin to feel it's *our* fault for not understanding *them*. (Still, I hope that someone subtitles it someday.)

Speaking of speech, look at (listen to) **Reality Bites** (Universal). It's about disaffected young people and is getting a lot of attention, which is often the case with such films. (*Slacker*, etc.) The person connected with the film who has had the least attention is the one who contributed most to its vitality—through its speech—the screenwriter, Helen Childress. The dialogue snaps and darts. I'd guess that some improvisation went on—not every one of those broken, repeated phrases could have been written, then memorized—but Childress shapes the sharp exchanges into games between people who are both casual and intent on winning.

That's the dialogue. The story is something else. Lelaina is valedictorian of her university class in Houston, then gets a job as assistant on a smarmy morning-T.V. show and shares an apartment with a classmate, Vickie, who manages a Gap store. Soon, to crash temporarily, in come two other classmates—Sammy, who is gay, Troy, who is not, both of them broke and unemployed. Troy and Lelaina soon begin the kind of verbal dueling that prefigures an ultimate confession of love. But before that happens, she meets a rising young T.V. executive, Michael. Michael is pleasant and affectionate; they have an affair.

All during the picture, Lelaina has been shooting her friends with a camcorder. Michael takes her footage to a sales conference, where executives love it. But they edit it into a snazzy, distorting, exploitative program called "Reality

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Belle Epoque. *Warmth, sex, fun and wisdom in this Spanish film set in 1931. Fernando Trueba wittily directs a first-class cast. (Reviewed 2/21/94)* **Schindler's List.** *A true account of the Nazi who saved hundreds of Jews from Nazi extinction in wartime Poland. All thanks to Steven Spielberg for this monumental work. (12/13/93 & 1/24/94)* **Philadelphia.** *Disregard the complaint that it doesn't tell us* everything *about homosexual life and* AIDS. *It tells much—especially through Tom Hanks's utterly committed performance. (1/10&17/94)* **The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl.** *This three-hour documentary lives up to its title. (Note only that it gives just one side of the story—hers.) The 90-year-old filmmaker looks back on her career in Hitler's Germany, and much else. (3/14/94)* **—SK**

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Bites." Michael, mortified, apologizes to Lelaina; nonetheless, she returns to Troy, who is outside sordid commerce (though he is a rock musician of promise).

All is hip, so hip that the term would disgust them. These people can see through everything. Their "seeing" is strangely aided by a central device: much of the film is presented through Lelaina's camcorder footage, which device underscores the characters' awareness of the media forces swamping them. They know fairly well why they are what they are. They are all so far laid-back that they can comment on their laid-backness.

But through the whizzing up-to-date pyrotechnics, three odd figures begin to loom, figures out of fifty-year-old romantic comedy: the Katharine Hepburn-Irene Dunne character, the Cary Grant, the Ralph Bellamy. Under all the cutting-edge chat, Lelaina is the Hepburn-Dunne young woman kicking over the traces; Troy is the Grant (as in *Holiday*) who doesn't want to wait to enjoy himself until he's too old to enjoy himself; Michael is the decent, reliable, conventional Bellamy person. *Reality Bites* has been called a genre picture. It is: but fundamentally the genre is not mod-generational dilemma, it's old-time screwball comedy.

Lelaina is played by Winona Ryder, back from *The Age of Innocence* to her own times, both more and less comfortable. She's more at ease with these clothes and locutions, yet she never seems truly easy. At every moment she seems to be saying, "See? I'm *not* embarrassed to be doing and saying things in front of a camera."

Ethan Hawke, as the up-to-date, intellectualized James Dean (he can define the word "irony"), is convincing on all the different levels he's meant to be convincing on. Ben Stiller—who also directed the film, competently enough—plays Michael with the appealing, slight clumsiness of a yuppie trying to cling to his hipness. But the plum part is Vickie, Lelaina's roommate, humorous and sexy. And chubby: she's almost a comic-pal counterpart to Tommy in *Raining Stones*. Janeane Garofalo savors all of the role's juices. •

Youth and Consequences

By David Rieff

Zlata's Diary: A Child's Life in Sarajevo by Zlata Filipović translated by Christina Pribichevich-Zorić

(Viking, 200 pp., $16.95)

It has become almost platitudinous to point out that Sarajevo was, before the war, a genteel European city. Its older citizens might remember the slaughter of fifty years before, but for its postwar generations the expectation was that life in Sarajevo would not be very different from life in Trieste or Turin. The fact that Sarajevans were cruelly mistaken about what the future held in store for them does not make their expectations any less central to the way that they, and those who have sympathized with them, have understood, or misunderstood, what has been going on in Bosnia over the past two years. Not that the bourgeois blandishments of Sarajevo have done its citizens much good, for all the cheap talk, not least from the secretary-general of the United Nations, that their Europeanness had garnered them a sympathy that they did not deserve. (Only someone as wealthy as Boutros Boutros-Ghali would have felt free to deride Bosnia as "a rich man's war.") But those blandishments do help to explain the distorted picture of what has been happening there.

Wars were not supposed to take place in the hardwood forests of Europe in the 1990s, between people for whom the ownership of seaside cottages, second cars and university educations had become commonplace. Wars occurred in the poor world. In a rich country such as the former Yugoslavia, its sanguinary history notwithstanding, a well-appointed, civilized peace was supposed to reign. As Janine Di Giovanni, a correspondent for *The London Times* with long experience in Bosnia, writes in her preface to *Zlata's Diary*, the notebooks of a Sarajevan schoolchild named Zlata Filipović, "before the war [Zlata] led a very happy, normal life.... She only thought about things that any normal 13-year-old girl thinks about: pop music, movies, boys, Linda Evangelista and Claudia Schiffer, skiing in the mountains outside Sarajevo and her next holiday in Italy or at the beach."

This is true, as far as it goes, as anyone who has spent time in Bosnia in the past two years can attest. The country's urban middle class, particularly in the cities of Sarajevo, Mostar, Tuzla and Banja Luka, listened to the speeches of Slobodan Milosevic and Radovan Karadzic and heard nothing. Even today they cannot quite take in what has happened to them. It is this cognitive dissonance that differentiates the reaction of Bosnians to what has happened to them from, say, that of Afghans or Angolans. In Sarajevo the universal pain that war carries with it is tinged with the surprise of those who believed their material lives would always be happy. So much for Francis Fukuyama's notion that "the end of history," which was never anything more than the end of communism, would be followed by a dull and pacifying age of consumerism.

"We're Europeans," my friends in Sarajevo kept repeating during the first year of the siege. These protestations were advanced as a feeble attempt at refuting the Serb (and later Croat) propaganda about Muslim fundamentalism, propaganda that soon found its echo in Western Europe and, to a lesser extent, the United States. But they were, more profoundly, a simple statement of the belief that this European identity should have protected them against what happened. And as late as the summer of 1993 Sarajevans clung to the idea that this "West," with which they so ardently identified themselves, would come to their rescue. But white Europeans or not, they were to be left to their fate.

In war, almost everyone (except for psychopaths and black marketeers) ends up sentimentalizing the lives that they lived during peacetime. But when those former lives really were as comfortable as those of Zlata Filipović, the disaster becomes even harder to comprehend. Zlata's diary is full of references to piano teachers, to television programs, to holidays. In one entry Zlata writes wonderingly that "this really is war." In another, she writes of what is going on with the distance of a tourist. "Sometimes I think of all the films that could be made in Sarajevo, there are loads of subjects here."

This amalgam of responding directly to the experience of the siege of Sarajevo and yet also viewing it as if it were a television show pervades Zlata's diaries, as it has pervaded the experience of ordinary middle-class Sarajevans. (The

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destitute refugees from eastern Bosnia who have fled to the city during the past two years have as radically different an experience of wartime as they had of peacetime.) When there is electricity in the city, it is possible to watch MTV, broadcast on the other side of the siege line from the Bosnian Serb capital, Pale. In a small black-market café in downtown Sarajevo, I watched the CNN coverage of the Los Angeles earthquake on a television set powered by a car battery with the sound of sniper fire in the background. Such experiences are anything but unusual.

If there has been a tendency among the journalists who have covered the Bosnian war, and the many other Westerners who have ardently sympathized with Bosnia from abroad, to sentimentalize what has gone on there, to view the Bosnians as hapless victims of something more akin to a natural disaster or a mugging than a war, many of the cues come from Bosnians, and particularly the Sarajevans, themselves. The last entry in Zlata's diary reads, "People worry about us, they think about us, but subhumans want to destroy us. Why? I keep asking myself why? We haven't done anything. We're innocent. But helpless!" This is affecting, and to some degree it is representative of a strain of feeling in Sarajevo; but it takes nothing away from the truth of this sentiment to insist that it distorts and oversimplifies.

As an emblem of the Bosnian predicament, accounts such as Zlata's do not cast very much light. The appeal of their message is clear. After all, the Bosnians really have been the victims, first of Serb aggression and later of Croat aggression. The murder and the displacement of the Bosnian Muslims is the third genocide of a European minority (the Armenians, remember) in the span of eighty years. To insist that there is more to the story than guilt and innocence, or that the innocence of a child such as Zlata is not the same as the innocence of a people, may appear callous in the extreme. And many foreign journalists, who had seen the horror of what happened in Bosnia, sometimes wrote as if they felt that the more complicated the story, the less sympathy the Bosnians were likely to get.

Perhaps they were right. In practice, however, this approach has meant that the attempt to win sympathy for the Bosnian cause, which is a just one, has been overwhelmed by the attention lavished on the Bosnians as suffering innocents, as a nation of victims. In a sentimental time, a time of *Schindler's List*, there may be no other way. Still, it is apparent that many people, Bosnians and sympathetic foreigners alike, have chosen to leech the Bosnian tragedy of its complexity. They have preferred to concentrate on the fact that the Bosnians have suffered, and not on the fact that the ideals for which so many of them have suffered are precisely the ones to which we in the West pay lip service, the ones that we should be defending also as our own.

To have described the Bosnian tragedy in this way would have been to describe it in adult terms. Instead, the canonical images of Bosnian suffering have been images of wounded children, just as now—with the publication of *Zlata's Diary*, which has already appeared in twelve countries, been a best-seller in France and been sold to Universal Pictures—it is the war as seen through a child's eyes that is being presented as the deepest truth of the Bosnian situation.

As agitprop, or more politely, as a way of mobilizing popular indignation in the West, the suffering of children and raped women seems to have much to recommend it. The blinded child whom Bianca Jagger heard about and went to extraordinary lengths to evacuate and take back to live with her temporarily; Baby Irma lying in the Kosevo hospital in Sarajevo, whose plight finally goaded Western European and American authorities to expedite medical evacuations from the city: these are the stories from Bosnia that have really "played."

It is in this context that the extraordinary reception of Zlata Filipović's diary should be understood. Ours is a culture where children are thought to be not only purer than adults, but also wiser. As the flap copy for the American edition of the book puts it, "in a voice both innocent and wise, touchingly reminiscent of Anne Frank's, Zlata Filipović's diary has awoken the conscience of the world."

The accompanying publicity release goes further: "Reading *Zlata's Diary*, we see the development of a writer and a mind. And like Anne Frank, with whom Zlata has often been compared, we are reminded of the resilience of youth in the face of unspeakable atrocities." Normally, the world at large treats such inflated claims with a grain of salt; but in *Newsweek's* excerpt of the book, featured with Zlata Filipović's fancily shot photograph as a cover story, these extraordinary, sentimentalizing and by no means entirely defensible assertions were repeated almost verbatim on the cover, which read, "A Child's Diary of War; Excerpts from 'Bosnia's Anne Frank.' "

I am not sure that even Anne Frank was "Anne Frank," in the sense in which she is described by *Newsweek* or the Viking Penguin publicity department. No one, certainly, would claim that Frank's diaries tell all one needs to know about the extermination of European Jewry. Quite the contrary: what is immortal about them is their particularity, the sense that one has, reading them, of encountering an intelligent, complicated and often confused young girl. To a very large extent, the analogy between Anne Frank and Zlata Filipović seems to have originated with the girl's parents, and with foreign journalists in Sarajevo. Janine Di Giovanni recalls in her preface learning from a Bosnian friend of "a young girl who was being called 'the Anne Frank of Sarajevo.' " In the diaries themselves, the first reference to Frank is dated March 30, 1992 (the first diary entry included in the book is seven months earlier, September 2, 1991): "Hey! Diary! You know what I think? Since Anne Frank called her diary Kitty, maybe I could give you a name." Zlata settles on "Mimmy," and thereafter almost all the entries are addressed "Dear Mimmy" and are signed either "Ciao" or "Love, Zlata."

There is something jarring about this, something that does not ring true. To a large extent, the force of Zlata's diary lies in the fact that we are privy to this middle-class girl being stripped of her normal life. As Di Giovanni puts it, "when [Zlata] began writing her diary ... she had no idea that the family weekend house outside Sarajevo would be destroyed; that her best friends would be killed while playing in a park." What, then, was Zlata doing on March 30, 1992, before the siege of Sarajevo started, let alone before it became clear that it would go on for at least twenty-two months and would destroy the city, comparing herself to Anne Frank? And Zlata's own personal history also undermines her. It is more than a little surprising to find her invoking Anne Frank after confessing on January 14, 1992, that "every night I dream that I'm asking Michael Jackson for his autograph" and then breaking off to watch a Bugs Bunny cartoon, confessing again on February 4, 1992, to pasting pictures of fashion models into a special notebook and nowhere giving any sign of a precocious interest either in history or in literature. And even if she knew of her alleged predecessor, why should she imagine that she, too, will be trapped in Sarajevo, her own "secret passage"? Only a few days before, on March 24,

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Zlata has noted that "there's no more trouble in Sarajevo.... We're safer now."

Were the mention of Anne Frank the only false note in Zlata's diary, it might be easier to overlook. But there is more material in the book that sits oddly with Zlata's customary childish tone. Again and again, the girl moves from detailing her own experiences during the course of the day to more general accounts of political developments or new horrors of the war; and the two strains of narrative do not cohere. Worse still, the diaries as published by Viking Penguin do not correspond entirely to an earlier edition of the book published by UNICEF in Croatia last year, and widely available in Sarajevo.

It is true that this first version had a different translator and it contains, in any case, only a selection of Zlata's entries. But it also contains a photocopy of Zlata's original diaries, which were written sequentially on lined paper, one entry following the other in quite close spacing. And in a significant number of these entries, material included in the Viking Penguin edition is simply absent, both from the first English translation and from Zlata's handwritten original. Take, for example, the entry dated April 3, 1992, written just on the eve of the siege. In the Viking edition, it reads as follows:

> Dear Mimmy, Mommy is at work. Daddy has gone to Zenica. I'm home from school and have been thinking. Azra leaves for Austria today. She's afraid of war. HEY! Still, I keep thinking of what Melica heard at the hairdresser's. What do I do if they bomb Sarajevo? Safia is here, and I'm listening to Radio-M. I feel safer.
>
> Mommy says that what Melica heard at the hairdresser's is misinformation. I hope so!
>
> Daddy came back from Zenica all upset. He says there are terrible crowds at the train and bus stations. People are leaving Sarajevo. Sad scenes. They're the people who believe the misinformation. Mothers and children are leaving, the fathers are staying behind, or just children are leaving, while their parents stay. Everybody is in tears. Daddy says he wishes he hadn't seen that.
>
> Love you, Mimmy,
> Zlata.

But in the original edition, none of the paragraph about Zenica appears. In the original translation, by the Bosnian poet and translator Ferida Durakovic, the entire entry reads:

> Dear Mimmy, What should I do if someone bombs Sarajevo? Azra leaves for Austria today. She is afraid of war. WOW! Safija came. I am listening to Radio-M. I feel

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safer. Mum says that what Melica heard at the hairdresser's is disinformation. Oh Lord, I wish it was. Mimmy, I love you.

Again and again, Zlata's references to various political events are nowhere to be found in the original edition of her diaries. Anne Frank's father was pilloried for having suppressed some sexual and family references in his daughter's diaries. With Zlata, the problem is that so much has been added. What might have been a moving tale simply told reads instead like propaganda, whether or not the text has been tampered with; and crude propaganda at that. Compare the original entry with the entry in the Viking edition for October 1, 1992. The first version reads:

> Dear Mimmy, Here it is! October is here! We will bring a little stove upstairs at our home. Now it is placed in the yard and everyone can cook on it.
>
> Mum came to work today in a state of shock: Two of her friends came from Grbavica. No sign of Mum's relatives or Nedo's or Lela. Nedo is made of anger.

The entry may not be well-written (or well-translated), but in a few words it conveys to the reader the circumstances of daily life, material and psychological, in Sarajevo during the siege. The version contained in the Viking edition, by contrast, strains so hard for effect, piling incident on incident, that it loses all force. It reads:

> Dear Mimmy, Spring has been and gone and summer has been and gone, and now it's autumn. October has started. And the war is still on. The days are getting shorter and colder. Soon we'll move the stove upstairs to the apartment. But how will we keep warm? God, is anyone thinking of us here in Sarajevo? Are we going to start winter without electricity, water or gas, and with a war going on?
>
> The "kids" are negotiating. Will they finally negotiate something? Are they thinking about us when they negotiate, or are they just trying to outwit each other, and leave us to our fate?
>
> Daddy has been checking the attic and cellar for wood. It looks to me as though part of the furniture is going to wind up in the stove if this keeps up until winter. It seems that nobody is thinking of us, that this madness is going to go on and on. We have no choice, we have to rely on ourselves, to take care of ourselves and find a way to fight off the oncoming winter.
>
> Mommy came home from work in a state of shock today. Two of her colleagues came from Grbavica. It really is true that people are being expelled from there. There's no sign of Mommy's and Nedo's relatives or of Lalo. Nedo is going berserk.
>
> Your Zlata.

Instead of a girl responding to the strains of upcoming winter, we have a reminder that the fine furniture is soon to go up in smoke. The talk of soldiering on could have come from a speech by Alia Izetbegovic, or from a Bosnian army music video of the kind that filmmakers in Sarajevo still produce when they are not shooting their own documentaries about the siege; but the one context, surely, in which it does not carry conviction is in the diary of a 12-year-old girl. And the point about expulsions from Grbavica—which started, in fact, six months earlier, at the beginning of the war, and would have surprised no Sarajevan by the fall of 1992—makes no sense at all. Zlata might as well have paused to note that the Serbs were shelling the city. In passages like this, she is not Anne Frank, she is a recruiting poster in prose.

More's the pity, since none of these interpolations adds anything to *Zlata's Diary*, and none of them is necessary to make the Bosnian case. What is needed to make the Bosnian case, however, is an adult viewpoint, and that is the one thing that Zlata, in any language, and however many dramatic episodes she narrates, cannot provide. And not only Zlata. When Sarajevans greet visitors with the declaration that they live in the largest concentration camp in the world, or joke that the difference between Sarajevo and Auschwitz is that Auschwitz had gas, their bitterness is understandable; but their sense of proportion has failed them. Sarajevo is a city cruelly under siege, which is bad enough, and reason enough for Western action. But Sarajevo is not Auschwitz, any more than Zlata Filipović is Anne Frank. Anne Frank and her parents were not allowed to leave their hiding place for a five-city book tour. This has been the happy fate of the Filipovićs, which is rather mysterious, since minors are not permitted on the United Nations airlift flights.

So Zlata has become Bosnia's first celebrity. But the same attention should be paid to books by grown-up Bosnians such as Zlatko Dizdarevic, a writer and an editor at *Oslobodenje*, the resilient Sarajevan newspaper. Dizdarevic, in his own book, *Sarajevo: A War Journal*, has provided an account of the siege that is a model of tough-mindedness and militancy. From *Zlata's Diary* you will learn that all the villains are "subhuman" and all the heroes are victims, devoid of any allegiance except to their own innocence. This is too bad. People can be heroes without being children. And causes can be just without being so simple that a child of 12 can speak on their behalf.

DAVID RIEFF is writing a book about the Bosnian war.

Romanticism and restraint along the Baltic.

Northern Exposures

BY SANFORD SCHWARTZ

When the exhibition of paintings from the Oskar Reinhart Foundation was at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the bookstore was selling large framed reproductions of only two works from this esteemed Swiss collection: Caspar David Friedrich's *Chalk Cliffs at Rügen* and a lakeside view of the end of an afternoon's sail by the Danish painter Christen Købke. That they were singled out from this large holding of primarily German nineteenth-century paintings struck me as perfectly appropriate, because they are by far its highlights. And, outwardly, they are remarkably similar. Each an image of a transfixing moment during a summertime excursion, they're pictures in which a Baltic chill in the air is beautifully confounded by the way the figures, carefully outfitted in the right attire, might as well be Parisians. Only later did the choice of the two works strike me as the daring of a curator or someone in a publications division, someone who was willing to believe that Købke, an artist barely known beyond his homeland,

Caspar David Friedrich to Ferdinand Hodler: A Romantic Tradition Nineteenth-Century Paintings and Drawings from the Oskar Reinhart Foundation, Winterthur

The Golden Age of Danish Painting

• • •

(Metropolitan Museum of Art, February 13, 1994-April 24, 1994)

SANFORD SCHWARTZ is the author of *Christen Købke* (Timken).

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could be acknowledged in the same breath with the founder of German Romantic painting, seen in one of his most famous works.

By a lucky bit of timing, the Reinhart Foundation collection is being shown at both its American stops at the same time as "The Golden Age of Danish Painting," an entirely separate, and far more complicated, exhibition of early nineteenth-century painting drawn principally from museums in Copenhagen. Although the Foundation show includes paintings that date from the latter part of the century, very many are from the first half, and they coincide with the Danish pictures in presenting the overlapping Romantic, Neo-classical, Biedermeier and Realist styles of Northern Europe during the years 1815 to 1845 or so, material that is barely represented in American museums.

At the Met, however, unlike the arrangement in Los Angeles, a viewer can't walk from one show right into the other (and the selection of reproductions is different, too), so a little effort is needed to keep the two events linked in your mind. The effort ought to be made. Neither show is rousing by itself, but the two shows, when taken together, present a compelling story in the way they advance, or strangely fail to advance, the case for Købke, the one artist in both exhibitions. As Robert Rosenblum has written, Friedrich himself was virtually unknown here a few decades ago. Købke may be the most important "new" European artist of the past to emerge since.

A painter of portraits and views of various leafy sites and historical buildings in and around Copenhagen, Købke has long been considered by Danes to be their finest painter. What is increasingly clear is that the artist, whose best work was done in the 1830s, when he was in his 20s (he died in 1848, at the age of 38), was a European master, too. He is not in the same league as Friedrich or such other near-contemporaries as Ingres, Turner, Constable, Delacroix or Corot. He exerted only a slight influence on some of his younger countrymen, and he produced no more than some 200 oils. Most of Købke's pictures are extremely small in size, too; many of the finest can be easily held in your hands. And his images are so immediately graspable that they may not even stop a viewer on a casual first glance.

On a closer look, there is something so breathtakingly precise about the light, color and space of Købke's pictures, and they are so gentle in touch, so clearly handmade, and possessed of such a breathing surface, that we believe we're looking at a sort of cloth-coat Vermeer. He is a Vermeer whose pictures are not imposing items de luxe but objects to slip without fanfare into the parlors of the newly powerful small businessmen and their families of the early modern era. Købke's views and portraits, his scenes of a person in a room or out of doors, add up to more than the product of an artist who quietly perfected his own highly personal view of the world. They also have a greater cumulative effect than the work of the various Dutch and Spanish still life and architectural painters, who brought to perfection strictly limited genres.

Especially in the range of emotion conveyed by his portraits, Købke's body of work really lacks nothing. He paints, to note at random, a one-and-a-half-year-old girl, a threatening old salt, a lively old Copenhagen biddy, a formidably confident philosopher, a sexy young officer and on and on, and in each case a viewer can feel, falling in love with the way the artist has seen the particular beauty and energy of his sitter, Why, that's me. Købke's world is as big as any national bard's, except—here is the Danish part—the sense of scale is fine, the urgency is tucked away.

Also Danish is the reason for Købke's obscurity, and in this the current exhibition of painting from the Golden Age is inadvertently revealing. The term "golden age" was originally used in Denmark in the 1890s to cover the flowering of Danish poetry at the beginning of the nineteenth century. That the term was gradually broadened to embrace the era in general, the time of Kierkegaard, Hans Christian Andersen, the theologian and educator N. F. S. Grundtvig and a goodly number of other ecclesiastics, short story writers and philosophers—and the choreographer August Bournonville and the actress Johanne Luise Heiberg—makes sense. It was also understandable that the concept of a national flowering would come to include the world of painting, since the artists themselves were conscious that they were involved in some sort of national endeavor.

Primarily under the leadership and the tutelage of C.W. Eckersberg, a painter and professor at the Royal Academy in Copenhagen, a lively generation of Danish painters bubbled up in the 1820s and 1830s. There had been few Danish painters before the time, and the Danish art world would never see such an influx of bright talents again. The kind of art Eckersberg fostered made the idea of a Golden Age of Danish painting attractive, too. It was an art free of literary or allegorical overtones,

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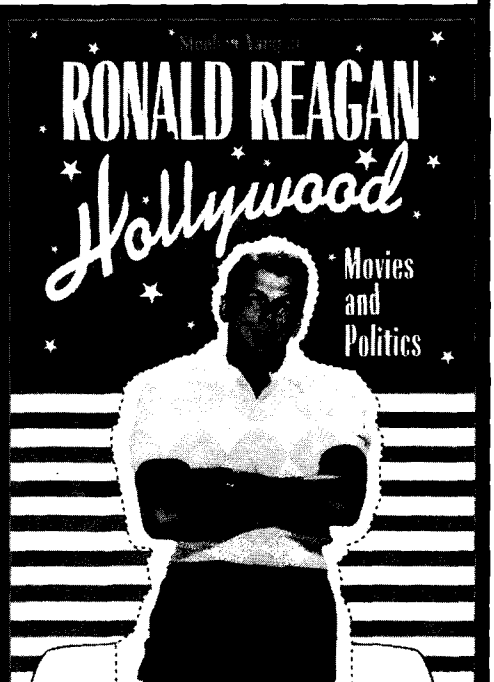

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devoted to recording the look of family life and city life, sunlight and the exact appearance of historic buildings and of people of all social strata. The plain-spoken naturalism and the emphasis on measurement and the effects of light in specific sites made this work, as it came to be better known after the turn of the century, appear to be a precursor of Impressionism.

In 1984 and 1985 the same exhibition as the present one, then titled "Danish Painting: The Golden Age" and comprised of somewhat different works, was shown at the National Gallery in London and at the Grand Palais in Paris. This was the first time that these artists had been truly presented, or literally seen, outside Scandinavia, and if only for introducing Købke, the show was eye-opening. But now that the exhibition has reappeared, it is time to say that the idea of a golden age of painting can stand a little deconstruction. What the often quite small and generally modest works by these dozen or so painters add up to is a kind of first step for a school. Most of the artists were in their 20s when they were in their prime, and once they tried their hands at Eckersberg's precepts they said their say. They didn't have much else of a past tradition to work against.

The chief romance of this baby school was in being an artist at all. The furthest these painters got into a realm of personal picture-making were scenes of one another in their studios, at school, out on the road. The one large goal they shared was to go to Italy and work there. Most of them did go; but the pictures they brought home have even less flavor than those they made in Denmark.

Danish art historians don't overrate these works. Kasper Monrad, one of the foremost authorities on the subject and the author of the present catalogue (and of the London catalogue), is not the first Danish art historian to suggest that the less declamatory "School of Copenhagen" might be a more accurate title than "Golden Age." Monrad is an impeccable guide to the particulars of the era. He can also sensitively describe Købke's qualities and the factors that make him Eckersberg's most exceptional pupil. But Monrad's approach, which is the basis of the exhibition and mirrors the way a visitor to Copenhagen encounters Danish nineteenth-century painting on view there, is based on the concept that, golden age or not, what we're looking at is a brotherhood, a team effort.

The result is analogous to a conception of eighteenth-century American painting that acknowledged John Singleton Copley as the best painter of the era but refused to look at him apart from the constraints of that era. Unlike Copley, of course, Købke was part of a distinct school and milieu; he attempted the same exercises and shared the same goals as everybody else. But there are miles between Købke's body of work and the next Danish artist's, and the exhibition doesn't bear this out.

Hirschstrung Collection, Copenhagen

CHRISTEN KØBKE, *A VIEW OF THE PLASTER CAST COLLECTION AT THE CHARLOTTENBORG PALACE* (1830) 16 1/2" X 14"

Certainly it is possible to get a taste of Købke in this show. Two paintings here have come to be his signature pieces: a portrait of a smiling young artist named Frederik Sødring, seated in his studio (often assumed to be Købke's self-portrait), and a view of two women standing on a little pier, with a boat in the distance and a momentarily stilled Danish flag on the flagpole above them. And five or six other Købkes in the show are in the same class. Yet more than half of the twenty-odd pictures here by him are second- or third-level works. We see, among others, his first recognized "mature" painting, oil sketches made in preparation for later works, numerous pictures done on, or about, his trip to Italy—and none represents what makes Købke wonderful. He is hardly a protean creator whose every little thought has life in it.

This is not to say that, with the exception of Købke, the period is a wasteland of faceless talents. Wilhelm Bendz was a live wire. He had a far more unpredictable, or, really, cosmopolitan, sense of figure composition than his contemporaries. In paintings of a family at home, or of art students in a class, you believe that Bendz, with his witty play of shadows and reflected colors, had a genuine flair for painting and liked giving himself challenges. A highlight of the show (and the age) is his picture of his brothers in their study, a room with vivid white and green walls. (It is one of the works reproduced in a flipped position in the catalogue.) No other painting whisks us back so fully to what we'd like to imagine was the Copenhagen of the time.

Johan Thomas Lundbye, who has a slightly less distinct presence, was in some way a junior Constable. Like the English painter, Lundbye was as happy to express himself in writing as in painting and had an appealingly tonic view of the moment. Like Constable, he was at his best in small, experimental oil sketches (though a large painting of Lake Arre in the exhibition, done when he was 20, is a beauty). In his paintings of ponds or hills on windy days, Lundbye paints in so many silky, sliver-thin slices, one laid down upon another. Another landscape painter with a delectably silky touch, Dankvard Dreyer, was a junior Lundbye. And Carl Dahl, a bit player even for Danes, is represented in the show with a stunning Copenhagen wharf scene in which a crisp, heatless light seems to be inching along the vari-

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ous wood planks even as we look.

Eckersberg is worth some attention, too, though he's more involving when thought about than looked at. He is not the official, public hero of Danish painting—Købke is—but he is the artist whom some Danes, I suspect, would as soon tip their hats to. I think there is something about Eckersberg's understanding of measurement and design in themselves, and his sense of art as a group exercise, that can seem more satisfying than the idea of the artist as creator of masterpieces that reveal the soul.

Eckersberg's own body of work certainly demonstrates a kind of egalitarianism. He tried his hand at intimate and large public portraits; nudes; landscapes; pictures of everyday Copenhagen life; and pictures of marine life. In the show there's a dreamy scene of people strolling about the environs of Paris at an odd hour and also vivid, postcardlike views of Rome. Most aspects of an Eckersberg, particularly the sorts of details he observes, are pleasant enough, and his drawings can be amazingly elegant. (Unfortunately there are no drawings by any of these artists in the show.) But his painting lacks fire. It's a cut above illustration.

What Købke did was take Eckersberg's feeling for exactitude and turn it into a style. In the eight or so years when he was at his best, Købke's work has as its foundation a delicious crispness and a sense of being an experiment in optics. Whether they're large or small in size, his successful works are always about an aspect of miniaturism. If a picture of his doesn't have in it some finely rendered detail that might not be picked up by the naked eye looking at the same thing—a speck-size person in the far distance, for example, or a steeple, or strands of hair in a portrait—the picture probably isn't fully alive. Yet Købke's sense of the vantage point from which we look into a given space, and of our distance from what we see, is so bracingly accurate that no matter how diminutive the picture, it rarely seems precious or even small.

Over the last century some Danish art historians, in their admiration for him, have spoken of the Golden Age as the Age of Købke. The standard treatment of the painter's life and development, however, leaves the impression that he was a careful, hardworking student, a person without much of a theory or a psychology. Købke's tale, taken on a yearly basis, was admittedly uneventful. The son of a well-to-do baker, he lived under his parents' roof even after he married and, in his 30s, became a father. Yet there was a distinct and taut drama to the larger contour of Købke's life. It is as if he made a trade with the powers that be. He agreed that, if he wouldn't develop his talent one step beyond what was needed to limn the life he was born into, he could do complete justice to that life.

The price of the deal was the spectacular emptiness of the second half of Købke's career. Eckersberg ploughed on imperturbably, decade after decade; but many of his students and the other younger artists in Copenhagen suffered early and abrupt ends. Bendz died at 28, on his way to Italy, and Lundbye, dead at 30, may have been a suicide. Købke's end was uniquely difficult. Newly married in 1838, at 28, and with the paintings of the Copenhagen scene now behind him, he was going to Italy, to make notes and collect impressions for the pictures he would eventually paint on Mediterranean themes. They would make him, he believed, a fully mature artist.

Back in Copenhagen after two years abroad, however, Købke was stymied at first, and the works he eventually eked out were dormant. His peers thought so, and so did he. And when he tried to connect with his original material by painting his family again, or the skies above Copenhagen, he went butterfingers. His particular brand of fine detailing could not be called up, and nothing was put in its place. Købke had been procrastinating and listless for ten years when he succumbed to pneumonia, not yet 38.

Even if the artist's story wasn't known, certain pictures he painted in 1838, before his trip to Italy, would have the weight of summations. These are three views of Lake Sortedam, a small lake that at the time was just outside the city. Købke's picture in the present Golden Age show of the women at the little pier, watching the boat as it moves away (or as it comes closer?) is one of them, and the Købke in the Oskar Reinhart Foundation show, the picture of the end of an afternoon's sail, is another. In Købke's characteristic fashion, these paintings are neither large nor overtly dramatic. Yet, images of leave-taking of one sort or another, they bring the artist and his age to a climax. And if the Lake Sortedam painting in the Reinhart collection seems especially strong, it may be partly because Købke is being seen outside the confines of his native art—he is the only Danish and the only non-German-speaking artist here—and because of the collection itself.

Oskar Reinhart was more than merely a big-time collector. Coming from a prosperous merchant family in Winterthur, and able to retire at an early age from his place in his father's firm, he approached the idea of collecting art with the avidity and stealth of a poet and a general combined. Reinhart arranged his pictures according to his own logic, and he made lists of works that he had to own, sometimes waiting for decades until a desired piece became available. He had to wait twelve years before a

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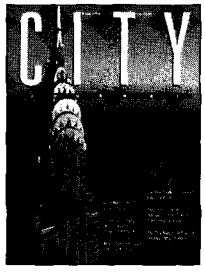

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Copenhagen museum would sell him his Købke, in 1960. His taste was formed by French painting, and, primarily in the 1920s and 1930s, as he was assembling the works by German, Swiss and Austrian artists which form the Foundation, he was putting together a separate, and staggering, collection that starts off with major Renaissance works and ends with Picasso but is mostly concerned with nineteenth-century French painting. (No work from this collection, called "Am Romerhölz" after the mansion it is housed in, is included in the present show.)

Reinhart bought old masters and French paintings out of a pure passion, but the works in the Foundation were assembled from a mixture of desire and duty, meaning that there are too many German pictures of a mostly regional interest. They are works that Reinhart, wanting to see himself as more than a dilettante, believed his countrymen could benefit from having together. But with his nose set in the direction of works with a physically luscious presence, as opposed to the more symbol-laden paintings that another German-speaking collector might have assembled, Reinhart made choices that were then considered iffy and now seem inspired. In certain small-sized figure paintings in the show, works from the earlier and middle part of the nineteenth century by Friedrich, Wilhelm von Kobell, Adolph Menzel and two or three others, German art can be seen in some of its most embraceable and experimental, and least portentous, veins. Nearly all of these artists, like Købke, are at or near their best here.

The Foundation's banner piece is Friedrich's *Chalk Cliffs at Rügen*. Much larger in size than most Friedrichs, this painting, which shows a woman in a vivid red dress and two men looking down and out to jawlike, sparklingly white chalk cliffs, beyond which is the sea, has for some time been seen as an ultimate statement of the German Romantic movement. It's an unusual work for the painter. In his mid-40s, much to the surprise of his friends, this lifelong bachelor married a much younger woman, and the painting is thought to be, in part, a memento of a trip they took, on their honeymoon, to the island of Rügen, where they were accompanied by the painter's brother. In few other Friedrich paintings are the figures as charming or as memorable. And it's the outward similarity of these figures to the group at the pier in Købke's Lake Sortedam picture that makes it seem as if these works are cousins.

Købke and his fellow Danes are now known to have been influenced by Friedrich, who was a generation or two older. And the official line on Købke's Lake Sortedam picture doesn't include the word "seminal." In the catalogue of the Foundation it is described as "enchanting," the epitome of Danish Biedermeier, which means that it reflects a high moment of bourgeois self-satisfaction. Yet what lingers from looking at it, and at Friedrich's picture of a summer's day, is how complete Købke's vision was, and how much more psychologically intense his picture is than the older man's masterpiece.

Friedrich is written about so often as a religious painter, as an artist whose universe is one big illustration of Protestant theology, that when non-German viewers are given the rare chance of seeing his work they generally assume that, not being able to read the highly abstract language of the pictures, they're missing something. But if the pedagogy might be put aside for a moment, Friedrich can be seen more directly, and more heroically, as the Magellan of nature appreciation. He discovered (for painters, at least) the quality of aloneness. For whether his scenes show rapt tourists on Rügen, or one person looking out a window, or a tree in the snow, or even a mist floating through a valley, they're always felt to be about the condition of staring out at the world and absorbing what you see into yourself.

Købke, though, wasn't really interested in nature. He painted water and trees if they were part of a place he knew, and if that place had in it some vestige of what people did there. He wanted to re-create the unifying power of light, and in this he was very much a member of the generations that followed Friedrich, in Denmark, France, the United States and elsewhere. But unlike so many later nineteenth-century painters who took light as their subject, Købke brought the same energy to portraiture as to landscape; for him the point of light is never its bathing, or embalming, timelessness. He makes light the agent of a hairbreadth split second. Presenting a face or a site in terms of a single gentle yet transfixing note of light, he creates the effect that we are part of that second of time and, also, that the second is gone.

If Købke's lakeside pictures don't have any counterparts among other paintings of the Danish Golden Age and are also subtly different from German Romanticism, they do suggest images from the work of later Scandinavian visual artists and writers: Munch and Ibsen, Lagerlöf,

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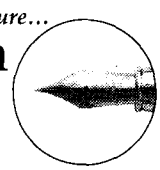

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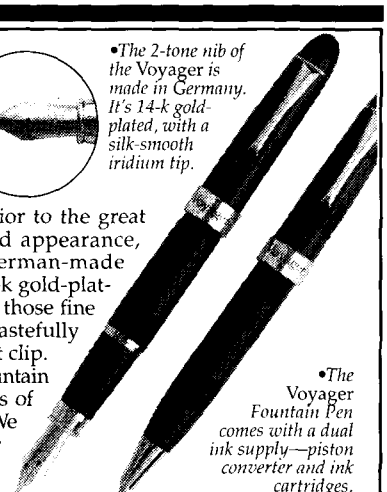

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Hamsun and Bergman. We're reminded of those fraught dramas, in many cases a tug between a small number of people, set beside a body of water. Whether an intimate lake, or a cove in a fjord, or a rocky shoreline on a sound, this setting is a key element in the unfolding story. Life by the water, with a rowboat or a sailboat tied up, or with a little steamer at the town pier, and with a flag flying somewhere, seems to be synonymous with summer itself, and summer is when drama generally happens in Scandinavian art.

In Købke's hands, relations between people are not the contest of wills they would be in the work of these later figures. Yet his painting in the Reinhart Foundation, with sunlight and shadow playing over the child, the upright women and the men bent down in the boat, might be a primal Nordic scene. Here, in acorn form, is the first appearance of that drama about the emotional temperature of a family or a familylike group of people. The picture makes you feel that, though he led his life as a perennial son, and still makes Danes wonder how much importance to give him, Købke was, at least in the larger realm of all Scandinavian art, a kind of father. •

Shock Treatments

BY JAGDISH BHAGWATI

Poland's Jump to the Market Economy by Jeffrey Sachs

(MIT Press, 160 pp., $19.95)

It is ironic that Jeffrey Sachs's celebratory account of economic "shock therapy" in Poland arrives just as the same therapy seems to have foundered on the legendary shoals of Russia. After all, if Russia's failure was inspired by Poland's success, it may be that Poland has finally managed to repay Russia for all the trouble that Russia has visited upon Poland in the past. Now that the virtues of shock therapy are no longer taken for granted by all reasonable men and women, a real debate over its wisdom can begin. The stakes of this discussion are high: only a dispassionate analysis of what went wrong in Russia yesterday can illuminate the problems that await us there today.

As is often the case when great issues and articulate protagonists are involved, the analysis of shock therapy has been bedeviled by language. The proponents of shock therapy are masters of rhetoric; and they have often relied on attractive phrases and misleading analogies to advance their argument. The phrase itself suggests a drastic but necessary corrective to unmanageable disorder; and "big bang"—another term in the shock therapists' lexicon—suggests nothing less than the creation of the universe. Both imply that we must push ahead at full speed: when there is chaos, and everything is a mess, surely that is the right thing to do. Gradualism, by contrast, suggests procrastination, a theory of lameness.

The debate over economic reform often becomes an angry exchange of analogies. One side claims that you can only cross a chasm in a single leap. The other side retorts that unless you are Indiana Jones, you drop a bridge. Then again, the shock therapists argue, if you want to cut a dog's tail, you do it with one slash of the knife, not bit by bit. And the gradualists reply that you train a dog by setting incrementally escalating heights for him to jump.

The shock therapists, who strike rather romantic figures on a dreary policy landscape, have succeeded in suggesting that economists who advocate gradualism are knaves or worse. But the truth is that the optimal speed of any reform is an issue of much controversy in theoretical research today, and there is no basis for the sweeping presumption that the more speed, the better. Indeed, gradualist thinking has a distinguished past in economics. Adam Smith, whose credentials on the subject of markets are naturally indisputable, wrote in *The Wealth of Nations*:

> It may sometimes be a matter of deliberation, how far, or in what manner it is proper to restore the free importation of foreign goods ... when particular manufacturers, by means of high duties or prohibitions upon all foreign goods which come into competition with them, have been so far extended as to employ a great multitude of hands. Humanity may in this case require that freedom of trade should be restored only by slow graduations, and with a good deal of reserve and circumspection.

And in a similar spirit, Keynes wrote in 1933 of the danger of haste, citing, ironically enough, the example of Russia moving toward socialism:

> Paul Valery's aphorism is worth quoting—"Political conflicts distort and disturb the people's sense of distinction between matters of importance and matters of urgency." The economic transition of a society is a thing to be accomplished slowly.... We have a fearful example in Russia today of the evils of insane and unnecessary haste. The sacrifices and losses of transition will be vastly greater if the pace is forced.... For it is of the nature of economic processes to be rooted in time. A rapid transition will involve so much pure destruction of wealth that the new state of affairs will be, at first, far worse than the old, and the grand experiment will be discredited.

One thing is clear: the debate over shock therapy cannot be conducted with catchphrases and sound bites. It is only when these distractions are dismissed that the important issues come into view. The actual content of the reform strategy in Poland and Russia, and its contrasting fortunes in the two countries, are subjects that require serious investigation. Sachs has advised both the Polish and Russian governments, and so he is an invaluable guide through these dense thickets. His little book presents a protagonist's view with admirable clarity and conviction. The main subject of his analysis is Poland, but he draws parallels between the "failed" policies of Russia and Poland prior to shock therapy, and argues for the method's promise in Russia after its success in Poland.

Of course, Sachs's confident prescription for Russia contrasts sharply with Russia's sorry condition today. John Kenneth Galbraith once said wittily of an economist foe that his misfortune was to have his theories tried (and to have them fail); and Sachs's misfortune may be that his theories were so successful in Poland that they were tried again in Russia. What was bold in Poland turned out to be rash in Russia. Poland earned Sachs a place in history. But Russia overwhelmed him, laying waste, not for the first time, to a great ambition.

To understand what happened, it is necessary to trace the decline and disintegration of the Polish and Soviet economies before the introduction of shock therapy. Indeed, modern economic history would do well to distinguish among four historical phases: (1) the decline under socialism; (2) the deepening crisis as foreign borrowing without reforms led to excessive debt

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burdens; (3) the disintegration under "market socialism," when market reforms were attempted within the Socialist framework; and (4) shock therapy, with its benign consequences in Poland and malign outcomes in Russia.

The economic decline under socialism has been well-documented. Scholars have long noted that the Eastern bloc's high rates of investment unfailingly produced few results. The blood, sweat and tears were to no avail: growth rates plummeted; and efficiency and technical innovation, the twin sources of increased productivity from investment, were incompatible with a regime that decried initiative and ignored incentives.

Faced with the chilling prospect of economic decline, the Socialist regimes of Gorbachev in Moscow and Gierek in Warsaw passed through two phases of "reform." Initially, both leaders tried to preserve the inherited economic system. They urged workers to work harder, and they sought to improve technology and productivity with high levels of foreign borrowing. But the results were exactly what economists had earlier witnessed in the developing countries: huge foreign debts were contracted with little economic payoff. The influx of capital bought a little time, but it burdened the economy with interest and repayment bills that simply could not be met. Consider an impoverished peasant who borrows and invests with little return and then finds himself hopelessly indebted. For Poland and the Soviet Union, the results were much the same.

Thus began the phase of "market socialism": market reforms carried out within the confines of continued state ownership. State-owned firms were now allowed to "set wages, inputs and outputs (but typically, not prices)." Sachs contends that these reforms were not merely incomplete and inadequate; because they were undertaken without privatization, he believes they contained the seeds of disaster.

Both Poland and Russia did indeed take nosedives under market socialism. But was the lack of privatization really to blame? Common sense suggests that privatization should yield greater gains by allowing more play to the profit motive as market incentives are introduced. But losing these incremental gains is not the same thing as losing your shirt. Are we truly faced with the option of going all the way or going down the tubes? Not really.

Regardless of privatization, Poland's and Russia's reforms could not have been expected to produce significant results. A key problem, Sachs notes, was that the born-again reformers were still prisoners of the assumption that competition (which, in principle, is compatible with state-owned enterprises acting under new rules) did not matter. Restrictions on new enterprises, import controls and a host of other interferences continued, and nipped competition in the bud. Reforms reinforce each other; one, without others, will not work.

But this does not explain the collapse of market socialism. To do so, Sachs follows a different line of argument, proposing that the liabilities of state ownership were exacerbated by the growth of democracy. In other words, glasnost helped to kill perestroika. This is a counterintuitive and interesting thesis, because the normal presumption at the time was that democracy would bring immediate and palpable benefits to a people that had been starved of freedoms for too long. These benefits, it was thought, would buy Gorbachev the time to bring the economic reforms along in a gradual, measured way. But the general consensus today seems to be that Gorbachev's reforms and Gierek's economic reforms failed because the terror had died. Reforms freed gigantic state-owned enterprises from the "command" system that communism worked with an iron fist. At the same time, the full play of the market and the invisible hand were not in place. Hence discipline broke down and so did the economy.

This view is not original with Sachs, but he states it well:

> Under the old "command economy," before the Gorbachev reforms, enterprise policies were controlled by central fiat, backed up by threat of force against workers and managers who tried to evade the commands. When the commands, and the threat of force, were (mercifully) removed in the enterprise reforms in the second half of the 1980s, managers and workers attempted, not surprisingly, to increase their incomes at the expense of the state by absorbing whatever income flow and whatever assets they could from state enterprises. They demanded higher wages and stripped assets through various means—either overt or covert.

This argument does not persuade me, at least in its general form. Sachs seems to think that wage explosions and asset stripping happened because "when there are no capitalists, there is nobody to represent the interests of capital." If state-owned enterprises had been replaced with private enterprise, he believes, these rude occurrences would have been avoided. But asset stripping, or "looting," is also a fact of life in capitalist systems with private ownership. Thus the economists George Akerlof and Paul Romer have argued quite persuasively that our own S&L crisis was in no small measure the result of straightforward villainy, and not simply due to unwise financial deregulation. Nor are excessive wage demands a rare problem for capitalist societies.

Sachs also overlooks an important aspect of market socialism. Once economic decision-making was shifted to the state-owned enterprises, and there was less retribution from the state, it became a lot easier to direct supplies and outputs to more profitable uses. Indeed, as the Sovietologist Padma Desai noted several years ago, the breakdown of the command system did lead Soviet farms to ignore the state's procurement demands and to sell their products instead in open rural markets that fetched higher prices. As farmers' incomes rose, agricultural production increased. Meanwhile state-supplied urban shops began to run out of food as procurement flagged. One solution to this problem would have been to direct domestic effort and foreign financial and technical assistance to building a better transportation system so that profit-seeking entrepreneurs could shift their rural supplies to more profitable urban markets.

It's important to recognize that the ills of market socialism might have occurred even with privatization; and that some good did occur even without it. In short, it was not the absence of privatization that led to the implosion of Poland and Russia. And that is a good thing. If market reforms could not be pursued without privatization in place, we would be in deep and unmanageable trouble. Privatization takes time, just as building an effective population control policy or extending agricultural assistance programs takes time. The critical problem was, rather, that neither Gierek nor Gorbachev had the instruments of social policy and of monetary and fiscal control in place as they experimented with market reforms.

If you shift to markets, you deserve to get micro-efficiency. But to reap the rewards in good measure, you have to use the social instruments that go with markets. A social safety net and adjustment assistance are necessary to reform, especially if you expect enterprises to respond to price signals and lay off workers when required. The shift from a society of entitlement to a society of opportunity, and hence from total security to total insecurity in one's working life, creates the kind of fear that Americans witnessed in their own country during the NAFTA debate. American workers, com-

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ing off a decade when real wages fell, were extraordinarily resistant to the administration's appeal for their support, because they knew that freer trade means greater flux and adds to insecurity.

A successful shift to a market economy requires the social instruments that capitalism has evolved over the last century. Unfortunately, these instruments were not readily available in Moscow and Warsaw for the simple reason that they had been unnecessary in a Socialist society. Ironically, monetary policy also slipped from government hands even though the monetarists were as much in charge under communism in its heyday as they were in Milton Friedman's utopias. The market Socialists might have tried to halt the wage explosion with tough monetary policies; but they failed to do so. In place of monetary restraint, Poland and Russia practiced an accommodating monetary policy that indulged the wage explosion by printing the money necessary to pay for it.

This failure of macroeconomic policy had different causes in Poland and Russia. Gierek simply did not have the political legitimacy to enforce strict discipline on the workers. Under Gorbachev this legitimacy existed, at least for a time, but it did not help. When Yeltsin took control of Russian revenues, Gorbachev had to print money to pay for Soviet expenditures, and a profligate monetary policy inevitably resulted. Gorbachev had little choice in the matter.

Contrary to Sachs's conclusion, the absence of privatization was not the "fatal flaw" that undermined Gorbachev's and Gierek's reforms. If there was a fatal flaw, it was the absence of the social and macroeconomic policy instruments that are essential to the effective functioning of market capitalism. In any case, market socialism did not work, and it became clear that a change of course was in order.

It may be that Sachs's apocalyptic view of market socialism predisposed him to drastic measures when he arrived in Poland in June 1989 at the invitation of Solidarity. It is also possible that Sachs was simply following orders; he writes that Solidarity instructed him to draw up "a program of rapid and comprehensive change." In August 1989, the Mazowiecki government appointed as its deputy prime minister for the economy the now celebrated Leszek Balcerowicz to spearhead such a program. It is hard to decide who led whom by the hand. It is certain, however, that they walked hand in hand.

The Balcerowicz plan that resulted must be clearly understood, for it is the essence of shock therapy. Sachs emphasizes the plan's dramatic and "holistic" features:

> [Poland had] to break decisively with the Communist system, *to end halfway reform*, and . . . *to jump to the market economy* [my italics]. The goal was to create an economy "in the style of Western Europe," based on private ownership, free markets and integration into world markets. The plan also combined long-term market reform with a short-run emergency stabilization program to end the incipient hyperinflation.

Like other economists, Sachs defines hyperinflation as a monthly rise in prices of 50 percent or more. The phenomenon is a familiar one in South America, where it calls to mind the magical realist fiction of Garcia Marquez. But it is virtually unknown here or in India, where rates of inflation reaching even two digits lead to corrective action—an approach to macroeconomics more consonant with the tranquility of the village of Malgudi in the fiction of R.K. Narayan. Americans can get a better feel for the phenomenon from the advice to take a taxi instead of a bus under hyperinflation, since you pay for a bus ride when it starts and for a taxi ride when it ends.

No macroeconomist will quarrel with the proposition that hyperinflation has to be attacked swiftly and surely. This requires a ruthless assault on the budget deficit, and on the printing of money that finances it. Fiscal and monetary policies must be geared toward the task of macroeconomic stabilization. And so in 1990 Poland initiated a drastic plan of action: food and other household subsidies were slashed or eliminated entirely; cheap credits to industry disappeared; and ceilings on borrowing were set.

The novelty of Sachs's plan, however, lay elsewhere. He insisted that reforms in the incentive structure of the Polish economy must be carried out with equal speed. Consider the convertibility of the zloty. The introduction of effective international competition is impossible, economists agree, without a convertible currency that enables traders to import cheaper foreign goods whenever domestic goods are particularly expensive. But Sachs rejected the conventional wisdom which held that a quick transition to convertibility for Poland was impossible since Western Europe had taken a decade after the Second World War to reach convertibility and most developing countries were still afflicted with inconvertible currencies. Instead, Sachs persuaded Poland to introduce convertibility practically overnight, setting the

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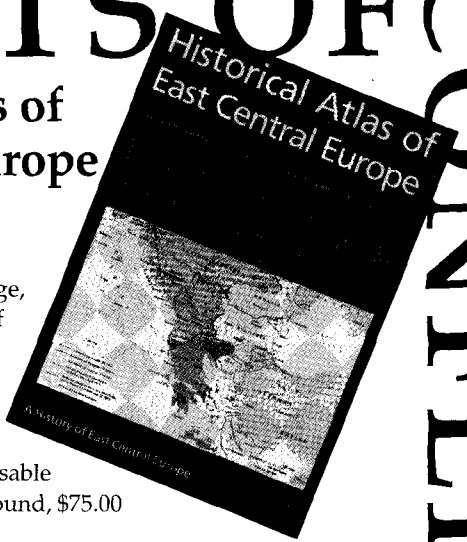

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exchange rate at an attractively low level and backing it up with a stabilization fund that guarded against speculation. As a result, Poland maintained a stable exchange rate throughout 1990, even as its currency became convertible.

Shock therapy also mandated a full liberalization of prices. It was expected that prices would rise steeply once, and then they would stabilize as tough monetary and fiscal policies emptied the fuel tanks driving hyperinflation. At the same time, wage discipline was imposed through a tax on wage increases that exceeded a norm: the so-called "popiwek" tax. It was expected that this curb on raises would limit unemployment and reduce the need for monetary restraint, since the government would not have to combat wage increases by refusing to print more money.

Sachs argues persuasively that this therapy produced dramatic results. Prices rose initially by 77 percent in January, by 16 percent in February and then by less than 4 percent a month in the two years afterward. The exchange rate was stable. Foreign exchange reserves actually increased. Confidence in the currency rose, and Poles began exchanging dollars for zlotys. But the bad news, as feared by opponents of shock therapy, was that unemployment rose dramatically. It increased from an average of 3.5 percent in 1990 to an average of 9.2 percent in 1991 and to an average of 12.8 percent in 1992. I suspect that the true rate of unemployment in Poland was even higher, since firms probably kept mostly idle workers on their rolls who shared work with each other in a makeshift way. The old gag from the years of communism was still good: asked where the unemployed had gone, a local wit replied that they were working.

Of course, unemployment rates were high in Western Europe as well. And they were high in Eastern European countries that did not undergo shock therapy. But the increase in unemployment in Poland was surely not unrelated to shock therapy. And the increase was dramatic despite the "popiwek" tax that a Solidarity-backed government had succeeded in imposing on Poland's workers. It is not surprising, then, that the social contract began to fray. In the parliamentary elections of September 1993, Polish voters gave less than 12 percent of the vote to the pro-reform Suchoka government, while returning to the legislature former Communists and future fascists who added up to more than a third of the new Parliament. The many successes of the Balcerowicz reforms were overshadowed in the political marketplace by the pain attributed to the therapy.

This unfortunate turn of events should give us the clues we need as to why shock therapy failed in Russia. In Poland the political preconditions existed for shock therapy to be given a fair chance. In Russia the political preconditions appear not to have existed at all. In January 1992 Yegor Gaidar, Russia's deputy prime minister, announced a program of reform that paralleled Poland's. Gaidar's plan, devised with Sachs's assistance, was to cut Russia's budget deficit from an officially estimated 17 percent of gross domestic product all the way to zero in just four months. There was no consensus in support of this bold proposal. The Russian economist Yasin Yevgeni has said that the plan was conceived and announced "Soviet-style"; no efforts were made to consult with Parliament or with the regional governments or with the people. At the same time, as in Poland, nearly all price controls were lifted, with the result that prices immediately rose by 300 percent.

The price increases cut deeply into the population's cash savings, which were widely treasured because most other productive assets could not be legally held. Meanwhile the link between wages and prices was severed by the removal of wage indexation for state employees. These developments magnified the widespread, and understandable, fear that a rise in unemployment would follow from the proposed budget cuts.

In a country accustomed to full employment, in which full employment was not only a principle of economics but also a principle of culture, the fear of joblessness went very deep. For a Russian worker, the loss of employment raised a specter of personal disaster that went beyond the loss of wages. Just as health insurance in the United States is linked to employment by a strange quirk of wartime history, so much else is linked to one's employment in Russia. Of course, no social safety net was yet in place: unemployment insurance was still being worked at. But even with a safety net, workers had little reason to assume that new jobs would become available to them. Meanwhile, a long tradition of paternalism toward workers possibly reinforced the hostility of factory managers to economic change.

To be sure, many converts to shock therapy were aware of the pain that their policies would cause. But it was their expectation that large doses of foreign aid would ease that pain. Sachs himself was a party to the so-called "Grand Bargain" or "Harvard Plan," which proposed that foreign countries deliver as much as $30 billion per annum for five years. Though he later withdrew from its sponsorship, he did not abandon the numbers. A funny story made the rounds at the time among Russian

On a Marriage

So you have chosen the way of the swan;
the way, perhaps, that is not natural
to everyone, but I will not harp on
about heron, blue bird or dotterel,

nor how the male flycatcher pairs
with two females, keeping a mile between,
so neither cops how the other shares
the same philandering gentleman.

Did you know the life-coupling way
of the swan is also that of the crow?
And there'll be crow-black days
you'll caw at each other with blind gusto.

But there'll be other times when you'll sing
the duet of the black-collared barbet
with the first part of the song sung
by one & the second by the other mate.

We wish you now many such duet days
& sing for you like the red-eyed vireo
who sings nonstop through the summer blaze
on this day you take the way of swan & crow.

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experts who were disconcerted by the fact that the Harvard plan had been put together by Americans who had little knowledge of Russia's history, institutions or language. Someone asks an American reformer, "How did you become an expert on Russia?" He says, "I have been there five times." And the Russian replies, "And if you have been to the bathroom five times, are you qualified to be a urologist?" But the real problem was not that the authors of the grandiose plan knew little about Russia; it was that they did not know enough about their own habitat. Numbers such as $30 billion were simply out of bounds. How could so much aid possibly have been mobilized?

The supporters of shock therapy in Russia were sadly miscalculating the aid they could get, confusing exhortations with expectations. Indeed, when shock therapy was announced in January 1992, Russia was not even a member of the IMF, and George Bush had not yet committed himself firmly to any aid at all. The complaint that the IMF did not deliver what it eventually promised is factually correct. But it is incorrect to imply, as Sachs has implied, that this was why the plan did not succeed. For shock therapy was already failing, and the system was returning to fiscal and monetary chaos, and so the IMF held up the release of funds until some fiscal discipline was restored. This is standard IMF policy everywhere in the world, and it surely has merit.

In the end, the Russian system simply could not accommodate the demands that shock therapy made upon it. And so shock therapy was reversed, returning the regime to large budget deficits and high rates of inflation. Political and economic realities on the ground drove the moderates in Parliament to join hands with the extremists. Meanwhile the technocrats who were wedded to shock therapy branded all who opposed it as Communists, reactionaries, rejectionists and worse. The eventual confrontation between the Russian Parliament and the Yeltsin government was a tragedy whose script had been written unwittingly by the shock therapists. The self-deluding world in which they lived was further in evidence when Anders Aslund, a former Swedish diplomat doubling with Sachs as an adviser to Gaidar, wrote in *The New York Times*, just before the disastrous election of December 12, of the certain victory that awaited the reformers.

Would more modest efforts to cut the budget deficit and slow the inflation have been more acceptable to the country and more readily supported by foreign assistance? Such a course was feasible. Most analysts agree that Russia faced high inflation, not hyperinflation, at the time of the shift to shock therapy, and that this problem allowed a gradual assault. The gradualists contend that the shock therapists achieved too little in attempting too much. Of course, the gradualists have the advantage of having a theory that is only a counterfactual. The shock therapists, for their part, tried and failed.

JAGDISH BHAGWATI is Arthur Lehman Professor of Economics at Columbia University. He is the author most recently of *India in Transition: Freeing the Economy* (Oxford University Press).

Family Secrets

BY JENNIFER KRAUSS

Across the Bridge by Mavis Gallant

(Random House, 198 pp., $19)

Family is an embattled country surrounded by moats in Mavis Gallant's precarious world. The characters in her stories who escape its confines—castoffs or deserters committing acts of treason—are wary adventurers, uncertain if they are being rescued or taken prisoner. When her younger sister gets married and prepares to embark on a new life in "The Chosen Husband," one of four linked stories in the latest collection, Berthe Carette looks on the wedding party as if she were composing a photograph, and in the process captures her creator's worldview: "It was an important picture, like a precise instrument of measurement: so much duty, so much love, so much reckless safety...."

That final oxymoron perfectly encapsulates the fundamental tensions of Gallant's work, between audacity and shyness, insolence and politesse, openness and suspicion, pride and prejudice. From "Madeline's Birthday," the first story that she published in *The New Yorker* in 1950, about an American girl and a German boy adrift in a foster family's country house, to "In Plain Sight," published in the same magazine last fall, about a fading French writer and the advances—and retreat—of his upstairs muse, all of Gallant's short stories concern the barriers that separate us and the bridges, treacherous or untried, that stand before us to be crossed.

The first four stories in her new book, which collects Gallant's work from 1980 to 1992, are set in Montreal, where Gallant was born and raised, before making her home in Paris in the '50s. They follow the bereft women of the Carette family from 1933 to 1977 as the men in their lives vanish or die. In "1933," the just widowed Mme. Carette is forced to move with her two young daughters, Berthe, 6, and Marie, 4, to a smaller apartment in the poor end of the city. On moving day—the day when the Carettes become "déclassé" (the story's original title)—"soft snow, like graying lace, fell." Later to be tracked onto the rug by French and Irish alike, snow (in Gallant's icy Montreal as in Joyce's Dublin) is a leveler; general, it seems, all over Canada. But it is, for Gallant, a leveler of a bleaker sort—dirty and endlessly melting—and it fails to bring her solitary pilgrims into harmony with one another.

Upstairs the French Mme. Carette mourns her husband and her former life, while downstairs the Irish (and childless) Mme. Grosjean, the landlord's wife—with whom Mme. Carette won't deign to communicate—calls vainly into the night for Arno, the Airedale whose whereabouts are as unsure as her errant husband's. The pair have run off unannounced to Parc Lafontaine, the omniscient narrator soon reveals, where they are "trying to play go-fetch-it in the dark." For this is what Gallant's characters do: they repel and beckon one another in a kind of half-light, passing judgment, making pronouncements and then waiting, contrite, in the shadows, hoping to regain their victims' sympathy.

Human interaction is plagued by mystification and misinterpretation in Gallant's short stories—as, indeed, are her readers, who are alternately made to feel that they are in the know and in the dark. A master of shifting sympathies,

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You deserve a factual look at...

A Demilitarized Palestinian State
Should Israel, should the world rely on it?

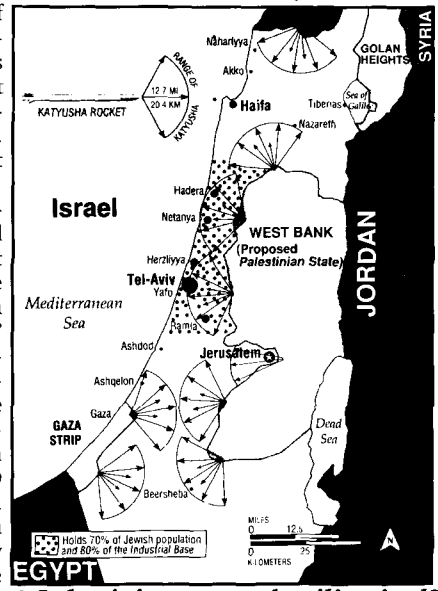
Even those most sanguine about the current peace negotiations are agreed that the Palestinian entity to be founded should be demilitarized. A demilitarized "West Bank" and Gaza Strip, it is believed, would do away with any military threat to the state of Israel.

What are the facts?

Israel surrounded by implacable foes. The countries that surround Israel are its deadly enemies. With the exception of Egypt, all other Arab states are still in a declared state of war with Israel. Iran, Moslem though not Arab, lurks in the background, its foremost military and political objective being the destruction of the state of Israel.

The PLO, is a terror organization that has only one purpose: to kill Jews and to destroy the state of Israel. While the latter objective is beyond its reach, it has been most successful in the former. It seems almost incomprehensible that a group as supposedly levelheaded as the government of Israel would have entered into a "peace agreement" with such an organization. Not surprisingly, events since the famous "handshake" confirm such skepticism. The PLO has totally ignored Israel's main requirement, namely that it forswear the clause in its "covenant" that calls for the destruction of Israel. Arafat and his lieutenants continue to make blood-curdling speeches to the Arab public, in which they re-assert their old goal of destroying Israel in "stages".

The myth of demilitarization. The assumption that "Palestine" would be demilitarized is not tenable. The Arab nations would not allow it, But mobilization of the "demilitarized" Palestine wouldn't really be required. The weapons of preference of Arab terrorists are the Soviet-made Katyusha rockets, highly effective missiles, truck-mounted and swiftly mobile, ideal for hit-and-run raids against Israel. A look at the map makes clear that these rockets, short-range though they may be, would literally dominate the heartland of Israel. Easily moved and hidden along Israel's new eastern borders—to be increased from about 40 miles to over 200 miles—they would rain destruction over most of Israel—covering in their entirety Israel's narrow waist that holds 70% of the Jewish population of the country, 80% of its industrial base, its only international airport, and its most important military installations.



A Palestinian state—demilitarized?

The Arabs danced on the roofs of their houses when Iraqi Scud missiles fell on Tel Aviv during the Gulf War. Since the signing of the "peace agreement" they have continued in unrestrained terror and murder against the Jews—and against each other. Their hatred is undiminished and their avowed intention to destroy Israel has not been forsworn—in fact, it has repeatedly been re-affirmed. Only incurable optimists can believe that an "autonomous" Palestine would wish to become a peaceful neighbor of Israel. If Israel ceded the Gaza Strip—the invasion route since before biblical times—and Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") to its sworn enemies it would make the country indefensible. Tanks, warplanes, and missiles would only be needed for the final mopping-up process. In the meantime, mortars and Katyushas located on the Judean ridges—Israel's proposed new borders—would suffice to neutralize life and industrial and military activity in Israel.

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Gallant throws us constantly off balance. The character we start out despising is the one we find most poignant by the end, and vice versa. Villains and heroes do not exist in her chilly wasteland, heavy on eccentrics and pariahs; instead she chronicles the alacrity with which congeniality can turn to betrayal, with which bigotry can metamorphose into loneliness and need.

In "The Chosen Husband," when Louis stops calling on (the now grown) Marie Carette and then, after a prolonged absence, reappears and proposes to her so that he can avoid the draft, we are predisposed not to like him—especially since he's been chosen for her to replace the pagan Greek boyfriend of whom her mother disapproves—but as soon as Marie says yes, and they escape even briefly the family fortress, we see that he's her salvation.

In the title story, set in Paris in the early 1950s, Sylvie Castelli breaks off her loveless engagement to Arnaud Pons, arranged by her parents, to pursue a delusional infatuation with the presumably more prosperous Bernard Brunelle, who she decides wants to marry her. When it turns out that she has misread his letters to her, Sylvie goes back reluctantly to Arnaud and finds, to her surprise, that she has misread him.

Throughout this intricate story Gallant plays skillfully with our assumptions. Early on, we look back with Sylvie and her narrow-minded, chauvinistic, social-climber parents at Arnaud and his family and their seemingly seedy, rent-controlled apartment—and we see, with them, an unappealing lot:

> All the mirrors were stained with those dark blotches that resemble maps. Papa often wondered if the Ponses knew what they really looked like, if they actually saw themselves as silvery-white, with parts of their faces spotted or missing.

What we don't realize until later is that the unreflective Castellis are seeing themselves, and that the Ponses, like the old furniture that surrounds them, are treasures.

And in what is perhaps Gallant's most disconcerting story, "Mlle. Dias de Corta," the narrator who appalls us at the start garners our pity by the end. Exhibiting the hypervigilance of the paranoid, this embittered Parisian widow, who embodies prejudice in much the way that Athena embodies wisdom in Greek mythology, is a first-person narrator with delusions of omniscience. The story is presented in the form of an open letter to Alda Dias de Corta, the Portuguese actress who presumably became pregnant by the widow's son when she was a tenant ir

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their apartment and then disappeared (or, more likely, was banished) from their lives. Adopting an appropriately surreal perspective—the widow decides to contact the actress, she says, because she's just seen her in an oven cleanser commercial—Gallant shows us the absurd and sometimes convoluted behavior that prejudice can inspire.

At once antagonist and protagonist, this most unreliable of narrators begins her elliptical address with a combination of imperiousness and carping blame and concludes it with a touching vulnerability. Lonelier now, since her son has married and had three children (with a woman of "mixed descent" whose "temperament is Swiss"), she issues a plea (thinly veiled by a toting up of the money the actress owes her) for Alda to come "home."

And so ultimately the widow does see everything, even her own shortcomings. But this knowledge doesn't change her: her magnanimous invitation is double-edged. While she urges Alda to surprise her and divulges the combination that will let her into the building, she furtively adds:

> "Be careful not to admit anyone who looks suspicious or threatening. If some stranger tries to push past just as you open the door, ask him what he wants and the name of the tenant he wishes to see. Probably he won't even try to give you a credible answer and will be scared away."

Prejudice, for Gallant's characters—rooted in stubbornness rather than offensiveness—is a natural armor, a posture that they cannot relax; to shed it would be to let down their guard, to make themselves vulnerable to attack. It's an us-and-them kind of world, Gallant seems to be saying over and over again. We are all fundamentally strangers. In "The Chosen Husband," Louis announces to Marie's family that "the whole world is engulfed in war": "Marie looked out the kitchen window, at bare yards and storage sheds. 'Not there,' said Louis. 'In Korea.'" But Gallant's war *is* there—behind the calm, immaculate exteriors, beneath the terminal propriety that prompts a character in another story to substitute the phrase "a state of affairs" for words such as "problem," "difficulty," "catastrophe."

Louis dies not on a battlefield but of emphysema, having been slowly choking on provincialism since he first met the Carettes. Virtually upon introduction,

> Louis began to cough and had to cover his mouth. He was in trouble with a caramel. The Carettes looked away so that he could strangle unobserved. 'How dark it is,' said Berthe, to let him think he could not be seen. Marie got up, with a hiss and rustle of a taffeta skirt, and switched on the twin floor lamps with their cerise silk shades .... Louis still coughed, but weakly. He moved his fingers, like a child made to wave goodbye.

Such hauntingly bizarre scenes—more prevalent with each collection—have become a Gallant trademark. It is the mundane, she deftly implies, that pushes us, paradoxically, to our limits; it is in the ordinary that we most often discern the extreme.

Yet several of the stories here reverse this equation. Reaching beyond her usual domestic canvas, Gallant has national and international confusion stand in for family strife. In "Kingdom Come," we are shown estrangement on a global scale, while being given oblique clues to the domestic estrangement that it parallels. Dominic Missierna, a linguist whose professional life has been devoted to conducting pathbreaking research into the indigenous tongues of obscure peoples and whose name, he tells us with disingenuous modesty, is often mispronounced by the natives as Messiah, has been sent home to Europe after twenty-four years in the Republic of Saltnatek—his grant money rescinded—with little to show for his missionary zeal but the blighting of innocent souls, or the corruption of the religious notion of immortality into the secular notion of manifest destiny (Kingdom Come into the coming of the King). It also happens that he is a divorced and neglectful father who hasn't communicated with his children or grandchildren in recent memory. Missierna, in short, is a guilty imperialist with no place to go for Christmas: "To enter one's family, he supposed, one needed to fill out forms."

This is a smart, evocative political fable that serves as a nice counterpoint to many of the other stories in the collection, but its easy correlation of the political and the personal is stated rather than shown, and as a result we feel estranged from the story in much the way that its protagonist feels estranged. Two other political fables exhibit similar strengths and weaknesses; they lure and fascinate, but they fail to fully move. Their central characters are so disconnected from human life that they seem mere fictional tools for some larger theory. "Forain" is about a morose and detached publisher whose stock in trade is Eastern European and/or dead writers for whom the destruction of the Berlin Wall is a commercial disaster. His hollowness is meant to mirror the hollowness of the contemporary world, but he's too shadowy a figure to bear the weight of such a lofty theme. In "A State of Affairs," Gallant introduces a Warsaw couple living in Paris whose status as Polish political refugees is nullified, and their special passports revoked, when communism collapses. More French by now than Polish, they are disoriented in time and place; cultural amnesiacs who must face not just their own mortality, but the mortality of their history, too.

Gallant's collection itself may seem disoriented in time and place, moving back and forth as it does between Canada and France, past and present, thwarting all notions of progress. But this is entirely appropriate. Gallant's characters, never sure whether they're coming or going, often conflate "here" and "there," "now" and "then," or find themselves stalled somewhere in between, teetering on that fine line between daring and cowardice. Her most recent short story, "In Plain Sight," which was published after the appearance of this book, features a writer who might very well be Gallant's alter ego, infused by Paris's air-raid siren with "a mixture of dread and unaccountable nostalgia: the best possible mixture for a writer's psyche."

And yet Gallant's unventuresome characters are sometimes lucky. Once in a while they find unanticipated solace in their predetermined fates, their already "chosen husbands." People bear getting to know, she seems to be telling us, foibles and all. *Across the Bridge*, more than any of Gallant's previous collections, is about perception, about the inscrutability of human nature. We see her characters, as they see each other, through a complex prism of prejudice and longing. From the myopic close-up to the all-encompassing, undiscriminating longshot, from the exaggerated zoom-in (the suitor choking on a caramel) to the distant zoom-out (the political allegory), Gallant's work is often Dalíesque or didactic. But if her portraits are blurred, they are precisely blurred: as we slide from close-up to longshot, we briefly hit that moment of clarity in between, when everything is miraculously in focus.

It is in those moments of clarity that we see Gallant's frightened but obstinate creatures standing their ground—often alone (the price they pay for intransigence). Aggressively entrenched, recklessly safe, they rarely walk "across the bridge" that her uncompromisingly clear prose holds out to them—so ominously, so wistfully—between dread and nostalgia.

JENNIFER KRAUSS is an arts editor at *New York Newsday*.

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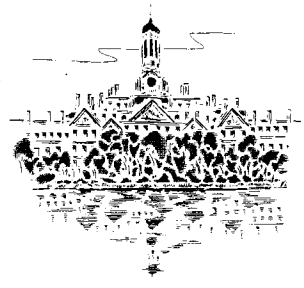
CAMBRIDGE DIARIST

Now he tells us

MORE THAN ANY OTHER JEWISH thinker, Maimonides, who lived in the twelfth century, still has sway over the modern mind and not just the modern mind of Jews. He was also a physician, and wrote widely on medicine. Among his voluminous writings—on drugs, asthma, sex, poisons, almost everything but managed competition—is this short prayer: "Supreme God in Heaven: Give me the merit to regard every suffering person ... as a human being, without any distinction between rich and poor, friend and foe, good person and bad. When a person is in distress show me only the human being." The prayer hangs in the offices of many Jewish doctors—as it may once have hung in the office of Dr. Baruch Goldstein—and animates their lives. This morning's *Boston Globe* carries a letter that begins with its binding words. Signed by thirteen physicians who are members of the health professions team at the Combined Jewish Philanthropies, the local equivalent of the United Jewish Appeal, the letter "condemn[s] the brutal murder of Palestinians by an American-born physician in disregard for his oath to revere life." And so still more Jews, however remote and abstract their tie to this one particular Jew (to say nothing of how nonexistent their tie to his beliefs and deeds), have declared him and his comrades banished and proscribed. And they did this even though Goldstein and friends hailed from the fringe of the fringe, ever so marginal and with no bonds to what is truly Israel's constituency in the world.

A FEW WEEKS AGO (AND FOR THE umpteenth time) Goldstein joined a demonstration against the peace initiatives of Israel's government. Wearing a yellow Star of David like the ones Germans forced Jews to wear during the Second World War, Goldstein told the television cameras that Yitzhak Rabin's policies would result in a second Holocaust. In a confrontation with the police he and his fellow ethnic cleansers screamed at them, "Nazis, Nazis!" They do not see the bizarre irony of this epithet coming out of their mouths. The febrile imagery of the Jewish catastrophe is by now stock-in-trade of the Israeli settler ultraright. It is not just a rhetorical trick. These zealots, who are a tiny minority of the 2.5 percent of Israelis who live on the West Bank, believe they are the vanguard saviors of the Jews from the coming apocalypse. The other Jews are either sheep or worse. Yes, Rabin, Peres, like the police who tried to restrain the demonstrators, they are all "Nazis," the most laden and profane curse a Jew can hurl at anyone. In a sense, then, the Kahanists have excommunicated everyone else. If this is how these fanatics feel about the leaders of the Jewish state, that state, for all its ambivalence about the territories, cannot have exactly been a nurturing environment for them.

STILL, IDEOLOGICAL madmen are nurtured in their madness by others. Some months ago Colin Ferguson perpetrated a killing spree, not unlike Goldstein's, on the Long Island Railroad. He left written evidence of his beliefs, and they are uncannily close to the beliefs of Al Sharpton and Louis Farrakhan. One may put his deeds at their feet. But it would be more than a little unfair if one were, let's say, to blame them on Jesse Jackson. Rashad Baz, the half-Palestinian, half-Druze gunman who seems to have been the one who shot four Hasidic students on the Brooklyn Bridge, was obviously a little unhinged. But unhinged people sometimes commit ideologically motivated acts to satisfy their grievances and give meaning to their lives. The young men he aimed at were not random targets; they were especially visible Jews. Would he have shot at a van full of towheads? The police have not yet said that Baz is part of a conspiracy, but he had advanced weapons that would be hard to come by for a rogue acting alone, and he did have accomplices. Nonetheless, *The New York Times* was right to applaud Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's statement that Baz's "act of evil is not the act of a people." But it was an act conceived in a culture altogether at home with the idea of violence against Jews. Last month in Chicago three Palestinian-Americans were arrested for torching the Kollel, a synagogue and study center. This fire (and four others) is not aimless vandalism. Of course, it won't be hard to persuade the Jews of Crown Heights of these realities. Many of them, and others, too, are still rightfully fixed on the killing of Yankel Rosenbaum and on the anti-Semitism that caused it. But if they recognize these truths they would do well to admit that Dr. Goldstein's psychopathology was collectively fed also. And though it wasn't fed by mainstream Judaism or mainstream Zionism, it was fed by people, calling themselves Jews and Zionists, who are both malign and deadly.



A WISE FRIEND POINTS OUT THE inevitable anxieties of Muslims in the modern world. Given the near genocide in Bosnia, which was virtually consecrated by the Orthodox church, any thoughtful Muslim must conclude that Muslim torments don't count for much in the world. Then there is the custom of extremist Hindu aggression against Muslims in India. In late 1989 and again in late 1990 militant Hindus murdered as many as 2,000 Muslims in their campaign to build a Hindu temple to the god Ram at Ayodhya. One quaint feature of the carnage was Hindu organizations, which orchestrated the wave of attacks, disputing government estimates of casualties as being "too low." Like the Israeli government, the Indian government never countenanced terror. But New Delhi couldn't prevent it either, and had great difficulties in putting it down. There has been continuing but episodic violence against Muslims since. Of course, there is the phenomenon of Muslim terror—against Jews, against Christians and against errant Muslims. In the war of the secular army state against those who want to enforce a regime of austere virtue, both sides are casual killers of innocents. For the ordinary Muslim, who wants to feed his family, send his children to school and be able to pray, this has not been a good period.

NOW HE TELLS US. EDWARD SAID has confided to *The New York Times* that he is not sure whether the Palestinians are "capable of having a decent state or not." One index of decency is a culture's attitude toward terror. Right now, reeling from the Hebron massacre, the entire spectrum of Palestinian and Arab politics parades its wounds and its indignation. The wounds are real. The indignation is contrived. It doesn't jibe with the indulgence long given to terrorism as a ho-hum routine. The Israeli Cabinet may have just instructed the attorney general to charge anyone praising the massacre with incitement, punishable by several years in prison. But both PLO and Hamas Palestinians wink at their own terrorism. Which, come to think of it, is exactly what Edward Said does: the Palestinians "are the dispossessed, and what they do by way of violence and terrorism is understandable."

MARTIN PERETZ

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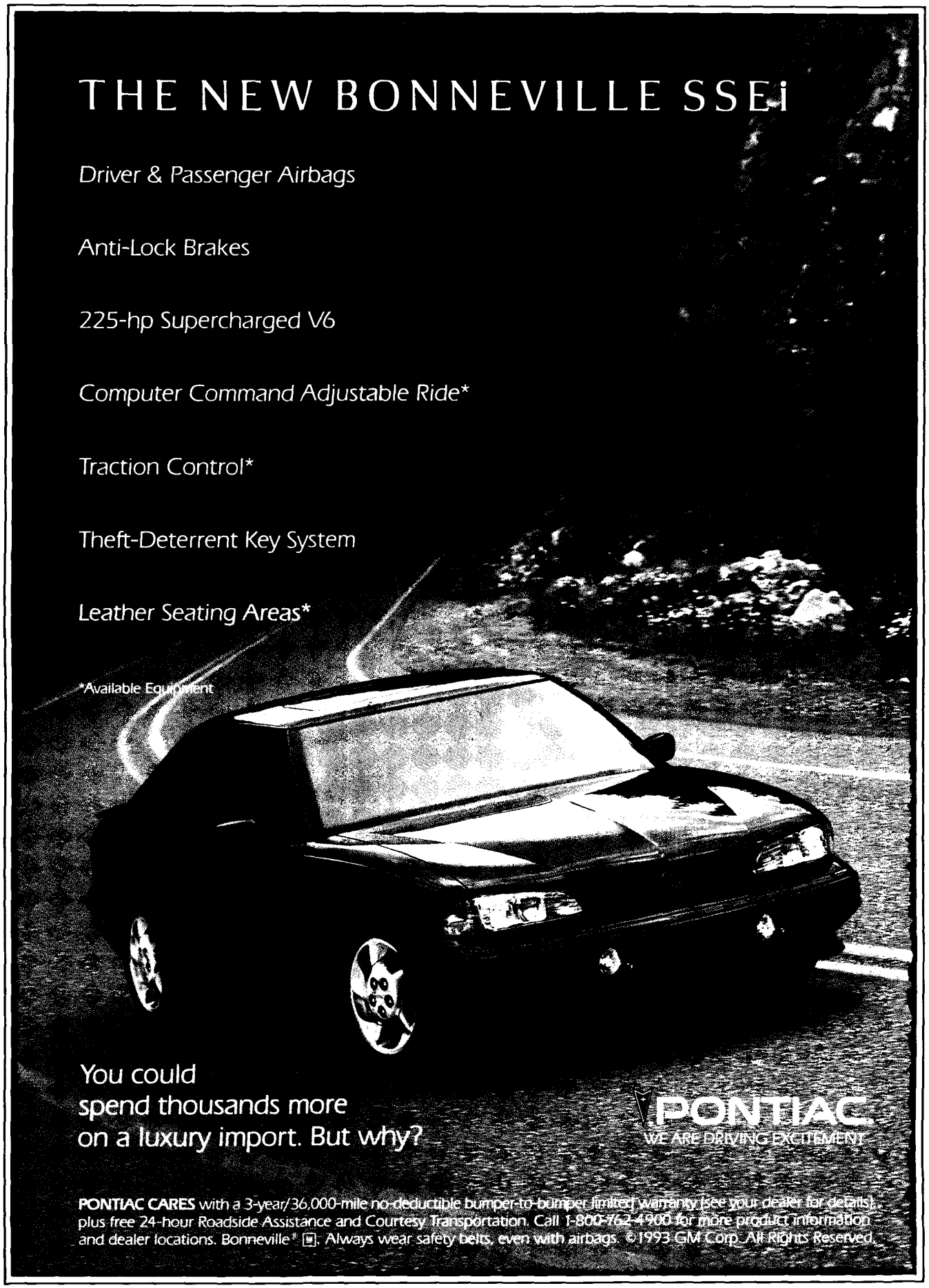
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